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# **The West Bank of Israel**

## **Point of No Return?**

Graham E. Fuller

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SECTION

This study discusses the causes of the intifada--the Palestinian uprising on the West Bank--as well as its evolution and institutionalization, and its ultimate goals. It treats the complex question of local leadership and the natural state of tension between internal and external (Palestine Liberation Organization, or PLO) Palestinian leadership. It explores the long-term ambivalence of Jordan toward the West Bank and the definitive death of the "Jordanian option." It reviews the character and implications of the "Palestinian option," along with the key political dilemmas the PLO must eventually resolve. It also considers Israeli dilemmas. Finally, the report discusses the new international factors affecting the situation. The author concludes that a Palestinian state on the West Bank is overwhelmingly the most probable long-term outcome of the present struggle.

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# **The West Bank of Israel**

## **Point of No Return?**

Graham E. Fuller

August 1989

Prepared for the  
Office of the Secretary of Defense

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**RAND**

## PREFACE

This report assesses the dynamics of the Palestinian uprising on the West Bank, its origins, directions, evolution, prospects, political significance, and implications for the region. It examines the basic forces at work in the uprising, the problems the uprising raises for Israel and the PLO, and the possible directions in which it is likely to evolve in the future. In March 1988, the author made a ten-day study trip to the West Bank, Israel, and Jordan, under the auspices of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. The trip—undertaken to obtain a firsthand look at the West Bank Palestinian uprising—included meetings and interviews with a broad spectrum of senior Israeli and Jordanian officials, political analysts, and scholars who specialize in Palestinian affairs, as well as meetings with a number of Palestinians from the West Bank. It was followed by a second trip in January 1989 to assess further change and developments.

The struggle is obviously not taking place within a vacuum; Israel is almost as deeply involved in the process as are the Palestinians, and the outcome is of overwhelming importance to Israel. The present study focuses primarily on the Palestinian side of the equation. At the same time, however, it considers a number of critical factors within Israel that have direct bearing on the present and future of the uprising and Israel's basic dilemma.

The study was sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and was conducted in the International Security and Defense Policy program of RAND's National Defense Research Institute, an OSD-sponsored federally funded research and development center. It should be of interest to U.S. government officials and the broader public concerned with understanding the broader dimensions of the *intifada* and the political implications that flow from it.

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## SUMMARY

The West Bank uprising, or *intifada*, marks a turning point in the twenty-year relationship between Israel and the occupied West Bank. As the first long-term, deep-rooted expression of political protest by the West Bank Palestinians against Israeli occupation, it has sparked a process of psychological and political transformation among a heretofore largely supine population that had always looked to external actors for salvation from Israeli control. The Arab-Israeli conflict has been reduced to its barest essentials: conflict between the aspirations of the Palestinian and Israeli Jewish peoples.

The West Bank Palestinians have now taken the struggle for their future into their own hands in an uprising that has shaped and confirmed their own political self-identity, a West Bank identity that did not exist before. The forces now unleashed—and the responses evoked in Israel, the United States, and elsewhere—have now made the ultimate emergence of a Palestinian state on the West Bank inevitable. Such a process will be long, painful, and complex. But no other solution any longer seems viable.

The question is more complex than simply whether or not there is a Palestinian state. The process of “getting there” is critical, for it will characterize the relationships between the Jewish and Palestinian states—as well as between Israel and the Arab world—for a long time to come. If the way to the Palestinian state is long, brutal, bloody, and filled with rancor, in a process in which Israel has not taken the leadership but rather is viewed as having gone down in defeat, the psychological relationship of the two states will be ugly and will perhaps contain the seeds of future conflict. For Israel’s relationship with the Arab world as well, it is important that the birth of the new state not be perceived as an Arab victory born of force and violence, for this might encourage further attempts to use force against the Israeli state. If, on the other hand, the Palestinian state is arrived at through a voluntary unwinding of the *intifada* in response to major Israeli concessions, recourse to negotiation, processes of building mutual trust, and reasoned political process, reasonable hopes exist for a positive relationship between Israel and the Palestinian state; a clear message will also have been sent to the Arab world that *accommodation* was the environment within which the Palestinian state

was born. The character of the process is thus almost as important as the outcome.

The roots of the *intifada* go back to the beginning of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank following Israel's victory in the 1967 Six Day War. Those roots were nurtured by the frustrations of permanent Israeli military occupation and the undying hope for an external "savior" who would liberate the Palestinians from Israeli rule. As a new generation emerged that had known only the occupation, new, more radical ideas were destined to burst forth. That the *intifada* happened precisely when it did was a matter of chance: The objective conditions were already there and it could have been sparked a year earlier or a year later. New social and political forces not heretofore witnessed in the uneasy Palestinian-Israeli relationship were already at work.

The independent spirit of the movement is growing deeper and more ineradicable as the *intifada* moves toward a third year. While an overwhelming show of force by the Israeli Defense Forces—one resulting in immense numbers of Palestinian casualties, the imposition of draconian new administrative measures of repression, and the expulsion of thousands of activists—could probably bring an end to the most overt manifestations of Palestinian resistance, it would not reverse the determination of the West Bank population to attain an independent Palestinian state. Repressive Israeli measures can now succeed only in bottling up intense, hostile forces for an explosion some time in the near future, when the issue of the Palestinians' aspirations will have to be faced anew and at still higher cost. In short, this is a deep-rooted, evolving national struggle; it will not go away, nor will the intensity of its long-term resolve diminish. A point of no return has been reached.

The *intifada* has created a new spirit among West Bank Palestinians that cannot be undone—a sense that they have taken their destiny into their own hands and have shown that they are capable of long, sustained resistance. A new Palestinian mentality has developed, accompanied by the creation of new independent Palestinian civil institutions that fortify the determination of the people to become independent. Time only lends strength to the process.

This newly emergent Palestinian self-confidence has sparked an unprecedented sense of dynamism that has placed the West Bank Palestinians on the political offensive as they demand terms from Israel. Divesting themselves of traditional political rejectionism, they now seek to talk directly with Israelis in all forums, seeking Israeli



recognition, much as they have now formally accepted the existence of Israel. The Palestinians believe they have placed Israel on the political defensive, that they themselves now occupy the moral "high ground," and that Israel has become the inflexible and rejectionist element. Israel is beginning to recognize that the *intifada* represents a confrontation with a genuine national movement.

The *intifada* has not only changed the way West Bank Palestinians think about themselves, it has also changed the way they think about the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO had almost nothing to do with the outbreak of the *intifada* or its initial successes. On the contrary, it is the uprising that has had a major impact on the PLO leadership, forcing it to develop new political flexibility. The *intifada* is the direct cause of the major new political moves by Arafat, including the declaration of a Palestinian state, the planned establishment of a Palestinian government-in-exile, recognition of Israel's right to exist through acceptance of United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338, and the renunciation of terrorism. These moves represent major shifts in the position of the PLO. The external PLO command must exercise considerable care in meeting West Bank needs, however, if it is to maintain the continued support of the West Bank population. As of today, the West Bank population as a whole accepts no leadership other than the PLO.

The establishment of an official dialogue between the United States and the PLO is another watershed. To talk to the PLO is to move a long way toward recognizing the legitimacy of Palestinian aspirations for a state. Hardline Israeli politicians know this—which is why direct talks with the PLO are absolutely anathema. Indeed, with the establishment of direct talks between the United States and the PLO, Israel now has, whether it wants them or not, indirect negotiations with the PLO. The United States has become the *de facto* intermediary between the two sides, and each side will of necessity hear the views of the other. The existence of this *de facto* channel does not, of course, mean that Israel will necessarily choose to exercise it.

The *intifada* has created new "facts" for Israel, raising fundamental issues involving the very character of Israel's vision of itself: What are its proper borders as a territorial entity? What is the proper ethnic and religious character of the Israeli state? What are the requirements of "secure borders" in both military and political terms?

Israeli society is rent as almost never before in addressing these issues. Domestic opinion is broadly divided: strong advocates on both the left and the right have a fairly clear vision of what they want, while the broad middle seems still uncertain of which way to go. The

situation is, furthermore, not static: growing pressures both within and outside the state force unprecedented confrontation of this issue. While the right-wing ideological vision of an Israel that includes the West Bank is still fervid, its proponents also recognize that the Israeli public may not have the stomach for a long and protracted struggle. Ever newer uncertainties are emerging.

The Israeli-American search for alternative leaderships to represent the Palestinians is to all intents and purposes dead. Many would argue that there never existed a genuine alternative to talking to the Palestinians directly about their own future. The United States and much of the Israeli political leadership believed for years that the Palestinians could best be "contained" through representation by another Arab state, perhaps either Egypt, or more appropriately Jordan, with whom some Palestinian entity could be integrally joined. The *intifada* has almost decisively eliminated those hopes for an alternative vehicle designed to block Palestinian independence. While the West Bank political community has its tensions with the external PLO leadership, it has not sought to separate itself from that leadership as long as the leadership is responsive to its needs. The future confederation of a West Bank Palestinian state with Jordan and Israel is obviously desirable and so recognized by most Palestinians, but it must come as a free choice by a sovereign Palestinian state if it is to be accepted.

Clear recognition of the *problem* is now emerging among the Israeli body politic, but this does not in itself suggest that recognition of a *solution* will be clear or easy. Indeed, even if all parties were to recognize that some kind of a Palestinian state must eventually emerge, "getting there" involves immensely complicated military, technical, political, economic, legal, social, and psychological issues that will demand genuine leadership and will tax the skills of the most polished phalanx of negotiators. And as the prospects of genuine settlement come ever closer, the prospects for three-way violence will rise: Israelis fighting Israelis, Palestinians fighting Palestinians, and Israelis and Palestinians fighting each other. The greater the violence that accompanies the birth of the new state, the longer the process will be for the new state to live in peace with Israel.

To a majority of Israelis, the resolution of the *intifida* and the ultimate disposition of the West Bank are basically a matter of security. If the Israeli state can give up most of the West Bank for *genuine* peace, and if the security threat of a West Bank in Palestinian hands can be reasonably resolved, then many would settle for resolving the national crisis by handing the territories over to the Palestinians as

the lesser evil. However, observation of the PLO over the past twenty years has not reassured the bulk of the Israeli public that it could ever live with the organization, or that genuine peace with the Arab world is ever possible. Suspicions will die very hard.

A much smaller group of Israelis believes that there is no evading the ultimate establishment of a Palestinian state and that Israel must come to terms with the Palestinians' only spokesman (the PLO) as rapidly as possible. A yet smaller group of Israelis espouse a deeper ideological vision; for them, security questions of the West Bank are not the basic issue. Only continued Israeli control of the West Bank can fulfill the Zionist ideal of a broader *Eretz Yisrael* (Land of Israel). This group believes deeply that the loss of these territories for any reason would tear something out of the very soul of the country and its national identity. Those holding this essentially ideological view would not be persuaded to change their minds unless the costs of retaining the West Bank were to become very high indeed. Different groups will have different thresholds of cost—nearly all recognize that some threshold exists. The more "practical" of the ideologues recognize that events could so evolve that Israel would find the cost of retaining the West Bank higher than most of the country would be willing to pay.

Under any circumstances, Israel's options are now dwindling. The occupied territories have become an issue of intense national debate; never has thinking been so fluid, despite the stated firmness of the Shamir government not to compromise on the issue. The Palestinian situation is also evolving rapidly, with Palestinians undertaking a newer, more flexible, and bolder political initiative that no longer rejects—indeed it welcomes—direct negotiations with Israel, *if* the discussion involves ways to get to the Palestinian state.

The recent Israeli proposal for elections on the West Bank affects the critical interests of all parties. The Israeli right wing perceives—correctly—that elections start the fatal process of establishing formal PLO control over the West Bank which will lead ultimately to a Palestinian state. Other elements in Likud and Labor hope that elections will wean a local PLO leadership away from the external leadership and will lead it to settle in the end for broad local autonomy. The external PLO worries about just such divisions arising, but also recognizes that elections would be the beginning of a *tacit* Israeli acceptance of a process that will in fact ultimately lead to an independent Palestinian state.

The international environment has undergone radical change, particularly with the revolutionary changes in domestic and foreign pol-

icy priorities in the Soviet Union that have direct impact on problems of conflict resolution around the world and that involve new Soviet roles with the PLO and Israel.

The tasks of the United States will be to decide what final settlement scenarios are reasonable and *possible* over the longer run and to work to bring all parties around to a recognition of the realities.

Disastrous turns of events cannot be ruled out entirely. The most worrisome eventuality would involve war—most likely between Syria and Israel. Such a war could provide the pretext for Israeli hardliners to bring Jordan into the war as cover for the expulsion of vast numbers of Palestinians from the West Bank into Jordan. This would have a devastating impact upon Jordan, almost surely leading to the collapse of the Hashemite dynasty—an event that would not be unwelcome to a small group of Israeli politicians headed by Ariel Sharon. Such a war scenario would also have a devastating impact on Egypt and would almost surely lead to the termination of the Camp David accords.

A second grim scenario would involve successful long-term refusal of the Israeli government to take those steps that the Palestinians understand as leading in the direction of an eventual Palestinian state. Under such circumstances, frustration on the West Bank will grow, the *intifada* will have recourse to greater, possibly armed violence, and the Israeli response will be correspondingly harsher. Such a development would vindicate the PLO hardliners who might then be able to reverse Arafat's policy of "recognition" of Israel and revert to terrorist actions that would lead to the severing of the U.S.-PLO dialogue. This, indeed, may represent the preferred scenario of Israel's hardliners. While the peace process would have received a disastrous setback, the West Bank population would grow stronger in its rage, simply setting the stage for a greater explosion at a later date. Islamic fundamentalists and Arab radicals would be the chief beneficiaries of such a move. Israel's internal mood would then turn particularly ugly and the presence of a hostile Arab population inside Israel would become politically nearly intolerable. These developments would set the stage for all the extremely negative consequences of an expulsion scenario: at the least, a U.S.-Israeli confrontation, the severing of Egyptian-Israeli ties, and the collapse of the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The terms "West Bank" and "occupied territories" refer to that part of Palestine known to the Israelis by the Biblical names of Judea and Samaria. The area is bounded on the East by the Jordan River, on all other directions by Israel. Lying on the West Bank of the Jordan River, it was part of the British mandate of Palestine until the establishment of Israel in 1948, when, as a result of the first Arab-Israeli war, the West Bank came under the control of the Kingdom of Jordan. The population was almost exclusively Palestinian Arab, part of the larger Palestinian Arab population that had lived in all of what is present-day Israel until the founding of the Israeli state.

After the establishment of Israel, the West Bank population felt considerable isolation and estrangement, both because it was cut off from much of the former territory of the Palestinian Mandate (now Israel) and because it did not feel itself to be an integral part of the Jordanian state either. Jordan had actually never viewed itself as purely Palestinian; rather, it saw itself as reflecting an "East Bank" bedouin character that has consistently dominated the nature of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, despite the fact that its population over decades has been well over 60 percent Palestinian. The West Bank population rankled considerably under tight Jordanian control from 1948 until 1967. In June of that year, the Six-Day Arab-Israeli War broke out, leading to the complete defeat of Jordan, Egypt, and Syria. Israel thereupon occupied and took over from Jordan the West Bank, as well as East Jerusalem—the site of most of the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Holy Places. As a result of the Egyptian defeat, Israel also took over Gaza, a small strip on the southern coast of Israel inhabited almost exclusively by Palestinians. (In this report, the Gaza strip is usually included in discussions of the West Bank problem, unless it is singled out for special discussion.)

Since 1967, the West Bank has been under Israeli military occupation and rule. Historically, it had never thought of itself as an independent entity, but as an integral part of "Palestine" and, less naturally, as part of the Kingdom of Jordan, the nearest Arab state with integral economic, political, and family links to the West Bank. The *intifada* is important because it represents the first large-scale independent political action by the West Bank to assert some control over its own destiny. Indeed, for the first time, the West Bank has begun to think of itself as a distinct Palestinian political entity, rather than simply as part of the broader Palestinian people.

Much of the history of both the PLO and the Palestinians on the West Bank likewise entails a struggle for independence from *all* political forces in the Middle East. The Palestinians have not only chafed under Israeli occupation and control; they have also sought to maintain their independence of action vis-à-vis most of the other Arab states in the region as well. Jordan, Syria, and Egypt in particular have engaged in several wars with Israel and have tended to view the Palestinians—and later the PLO—as a legitimate political and military instrument for their own use in the broader struggle against Israel. Indeed, the PLO has struggled to maintain maximum independence from the major Arab states, which have tended to believe that their external support—funds, weapons, training, or bases for operations—should commit the PLO to serving their various political goals. The embrace of many of these states, especially Syria, has frequently served to keep the PLO, in one form or another, in a state of near captivity. The PLO has had to struggle to insist that it is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The period of the *intifada* is noteworthy for, among other things, the increased independence exercised by both the West Bankers and the PLO. Indeed, the *intifada* represents a decisive shift away from the traditional Arab-Israeli struggle to a directly Palestinian-Israeli struggle.

Any political settlement on the West Bank has been rendered much more complex by the policy of several Israeli governments, especially the Likud, of encouraging the settlement of Israeli Jews on the West Bank, “creating (demographic and territorial) facts” to complicate or block any eventual Israeli relinquishment of the territory, and to strengthen the Israeli security foothold in the area. It is ironic that much of the Israeli populace has come to view the Israeli settlements on the West Bank as holding Israel political hostage to an ugly future rather than ensuring certain Israeli control.

This study discusses the causes of the *intifada*, its evolution and institutionalization, and its ultimate goals. It treats the complex question of local leadership and the natural state of tension between internal and external Palestinian (PLO) leadership. It explores the long-term ambivalence of Jordan toward the West Bank and the definitive death of the “Jordanian option.” The character and implications of the “Palestinian option” are reviewed, along with the key political dilemmas the PLO must eventually resolve. Israeli dilemmas are also discussed. The report concludes with a look at the new international factors affecting the situation and some conclusions about the ultimate results of the *intifada*.



## II. THE INTIFADA

### CAUSES OF THE UPRISING

The *intifada*, which first manifested itself in December 1987, springs from many different factors, some long-term, some more immediate:

- Deep frustration with Israeli occupation practices which West Bank Palestinians believe involve discriminatory economic and trade practices,<sup>1</sup> deprivation of any clear civil status under Israeli military rule,<sup>2</sup> and constant police and administrative harassment designed to humiliate Palestinians and "keep them in their place."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The West Bank is strongly dependent on Israel: In 1986, while the population ratio between Israel and the West Bank was 3:1, the GNP ratio was 12:1. The West Bank also suffers a severe trade deficit with Israel, to Israel's considerable advantage: In 1984, West Bank exports to Israel totaled \$190 million, while West Bank imports from Israel totaled \$740 million. Despite the presence of an educated population, West Bank industry is "rudimentary." (See "Political Implications of Economic Development in the West Bank," a lecture presented on April 9, 1986, by Professor Emmanuel Sivan of Hebrew University, a summary of which was published by the Washington Institute for Near East Studies.)

The West Bank also tends to represent a ready labor pool of daily "migrant workers" who fill menial positions in Israel—in part because of the strength of the Israeli economy, but also in part because of Israeli discouragement of industrial growth on the West Bank and a ban on Israeli investment in the territories. (See Thomas L. Friedman, "Israel's Arab Army of Migrant Workers," *New York Times*, December 6, 1987; see also Azmy Bishara, "Israel Faces the Uprising: A Preliminary Assessment," *Middle East Report*, March–April 1989, p. 12.)

Mayor Elias Freij of Bethlehem has complained that Israeli taxes on the West Bank are heavy and are not spent proportionately on the territories. Palestinian farmers are denied markets for their produce in Israel, even though their crops represent only 1 percent of Israeli production (from an address by Elias Freij to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy on October 15, 1987, a summary of which was later published by the Institute).

According to Bishara, "Israel collects \$383 million in taxes from the occupied territories and allocates \$240 million for expenditures in the territories." Israel also deducts social security taxes from Palestinian workers in Israel but does not pay benefits to them. (See Bishara, *op. cit.*, p. 12.)

<sup>2</sup>Since Israel is still technically an occupier of the West Bank and has not formally annexed it, Israeli law is not operative there. Current law represents a mixture of martial law and traditional Jordanian law, depending on the issue at hand. Martial law obviously carries broad weight in times of disorder.

<sup>3</sup>Since the *intifada* began, Israeli authorities have used a variety of clearly punitive "administrative measures"—permits, freedom of access, etc.—designed to make daily life as difficult as possible, with the aim of suppressing the uprising. Palestinians

- The inadvertent creation—as a consequence of the occupation—of *new standards* against which the Palestinians now set their own aspirations: No longer do they gauge their conditions against those of the Arab world; they hold them up against the standards of the Israeli world in which they live. They compare their wages and lack of welfare programs against those received by Israeli Jewish workers. They compare their minimal civil liberties and press restrictions against the Israeli model, not against the Arab world.
- A growing sense of Palestinian frustration at complete *abandonment and apparent long-term international indifference* to their plight. The Arab states to which they have historically looked for succor have accomplished nothing: Nasser failed in the 1967 war; Sadat did not deliver in the 1973 war; Jordan will not move; the Iraqi army is far away and preoccupied with Iran; the PLO has been ineffective in combatting Israel during over twenty years of “the armed struggle”; international politicking has not yet alleviated the West Bank plight; Arafat was humiliated at the November 1987 Arab summit, where the Palestine issue was scarcely considered; Arab leadership has been absorbed in the interminable Gulf War; the superpowers have done nothing and even met at a late 1987 summit, where not only were the issues of the Palestinians totally ignored, but only questions of human rights for *Jews* in the USSR were discussed; yet Palestinians cannot even get approval for permits pending on the reunification of some 5,000 Palestinian husbands and wives.<sup>4</sup>
- An abiding fear that Israel is not interested in land for peace, but only in *the land*. Increasing Israeli settlements on the West Bank have strengthened that conviction. Since 1967, Israel has taken over by one means or another some 52 percent of the West Bank land. One-third of the water of the West Bank now goes to Israeli settlements.<sup>5</sup> Nearly 70,000

complain that even before the *intifada*, they were treated as second-class citizens in most of their dealings with Israeli authorities.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Mayor Elias Freij of Bethlehem, March 1988.

<sup>5</sup>For further data on Israeli settlements on the West Bank and the high agricultural quality of the land lost to the West Bankers, see the definitive work of Meron Benvenisti, Director of the “West Bank Data Project” in Jerusalem. Many of Benvenisti’s key findings were published by the American Enterprise Institute in 1984. Critical statistics on demography, land loss, water, Jewish settlements, and other topics continue to emerge from his project.

Jewish settlers now live in the West Bank out of a total population of some 1.7 million.<sup>6</sup>

- A fear that *Israel plans to expel the West Bank Palestinians from the West Bank*, based on increasing talk of this eventuality—no longer solely by supporters of Meir Kahane, but even by the deputy Defense Minister in mid-1987.<sup>7</sup>
- *Opposition to the Shultz plan and autonomy talks*. In the end, Palestinians perceive "autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza" as a code word for the perpetuation of the status quo of Israeli control.
- The particularly *oppressive character* of the squalid and overcrowded *refugee camps in the Gaza strip*, "one of the most densely crowded strips of land on earth."<sup>8</sup>
- *Internal social tensions emerging from the prolonged occupation*, including intergenerational differences over the benefits and costs of political resistance and terrorism; tensions between those who have chosen to accommodate to the resistance and those who have not; between Palestinians on the "outside" who have idealistic or unrealistic views about combatting the occupation and Palestinian residents in the occupied territories who must face the daily realities of surviving there; tensions between those who have fared well under the occupation and those who have not, between those who choose to commute to Israel to work for better salaries for their families and those who will not, between Jewish and Palestinian laborers on the job in Israel; tensions resulting from the subtle anti-Arab discrimination that exists at all

<sup>6</sup>Daniel Williams, "Shamir for New Settlements in Occupied Lands," *Los Angeles Times*, November 6, 1988; see also George Moffet, "West Bank Report Shakes Israeli Plans," *Los Angeles Times*, October 19, 1988, citing Benvenisti's West Bank Data Project.

<sup>7</sup>Daniel Williams, "Talk of Moving Arabs Out No Longer Taboo in Israel," *Los Angeles Times*, August 28, 1988; see also Yossi Melman and Dan Raviv, "Expelling Palestinians," *Washington Post*, February 7, 1988; also Glenn Frankel, "Some Israelis Urge Arabs' Expulsion," *Washington Post*, October 31, 1987.

<sup>8</sup>See Mary Curtius, "Israel's Collective Punishment of Gaza Palestinians Reaps Bitterness," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 6, 1987. Patrick E. Tyler, "Israelis Patrol Uneasy Gaza Strip," *Washington Post*, December 18, 1987, reports that 650,000 people live in a 100-square-mile area. The refugee camps of Gaza have always been regarded by Israeli authorities as presenting the worst economic and social conditions of all Palestinian settlements in the occupied territories. It was in Gaza that the *intifada* began, and Gaza is also the stronghold of Islamic fundamentalist activism.

levels;<sup>9</sup> and disagreement between the political left and right among Palestinians themselves.<sup>10</sup>

A more immediate spark to the *intifada* was a growing sense of emboldenment—crystallized by the symbolically important hang-glider attack by Palestinian guerrillas from Lebanon against Israeli soldiers in northern Israel in November 1987, demonstrating at a key political juncture that Palestinians were still capable of imaginative ways to take on and damage the Israeli occupying forces.<sup>11</sup>

The preconditions for the *intifada* had thus been brewing for some time, accompanied by the gradual emergence of a younger generation that had grown up under Israeli occupation and was less in awe of it. This volatile mixture awaited a spark to set it off. In the eyes of most observers, the *intifada* could have started a year earlier or a year later; the specific incident that sparked it—a car accident in Gaza that killed several Palestinians—was incidental. Once the spark had been struck, however, the conflagration took hold and spread.

#### CAN THE INTIFADA BE PUT DOWN?

Of key importance is the likely duration of the uprising. It has already lasted over a year and a half—far longer than anyone anticipated. Nearly all Israeli officials have consistently said that it must be put down before any other political alternatives or negotiations can take place. Labor might be inclined to more generous negotiations than Likud, but both parties say they cannot talk seriously as long as the disorders persist: “We cannot negotiate while the other party is pressuring us.” As the *intifada* continues month after month into its second year, Israeli officials almost surely will eventually be forced to change their position. Initial explorations by U.S. diplomats into mutual tension-lowering steps in early 1989 suggest that there is some increase in Israeli interest in such moves.

Neither political party in Israel was able to deal creatively or generously with the Palestinian problem under the old Labor/Likud na-

<sup>9</sup>Yoram Binur, an Israeli journalist who posed as an Arab in Israel for many weeks in order to record details of the treatment accorded him as a second-class citizen, or even a “non-person,” has published an account of his experience in *My Enemy, My Self*, Doubleday, New York, 1989.

<sup>10</sup>Many Palestinian novels describe daily conditions and social relations in the occupied territories; one of the most revealing is Sahar Khalifeh, *Wild Thorns*, translated by Trevor Le Gassick and Elizabeth Fernea, Al Saqi Books, London, 1976.

<sup>11</sup>Cited by several Israeli and Palestinian sources during interviews in March 1988.

tional coalition government—one in which Labor had a major voice and role. Following the November 1988 elections, a new Likud/Labor national coalition government emerged in which Labor had lost ground to Likud and had to settle for a harder line toward the Palestinians that rules out negotiations with the PLO. Military policy toward demonstrators has toughened, and Palestinian casualties have occurred at a more rapid rate. Many hardline Israeli officials, including former Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, will only address the Palestinians from a position of *force majeure*, which requires the Palestinians to recognize both defeat and the lack of any acceptable alternative for themselves.<sup>12</sup> Palestinians, on the other hand, hardly find it in their interest to want to negotiate *after* they have been crushed.

Some hardline officials, like Sharon—and he is not alone—believe that the uprising can in fact be contained and eventually suppressed, although they believe that priceless time has been lost, enabling the Palestinians to seize the political and tactical initiative. Sharon believes that if really tough measures had been taken at the outset, Rabin could have quelled the whole thing from the start. Sharon and some other Likud members claim to have specific proposals on how to end the uprising in fairly short order. Although they have offered no details, they clearly imply a mixture of (1) force, including many deaths, arrests, and deportations; (2) a creative array of “administrative measures,” special permits, and restrictions; and (3) a variety of economic pressures, including denial of jobs, denial of produce export rights to Jordan, etc. Sharon most recently has publicly called for the assassination of Arafat and those around him as essential to an ending of the *intifada*. These officials emphasize the need to use massive force quickly rather than dragging out the conflict with more modest measures. A few draconian days, they believe, would intimidate the Palestinians and would force them to retreat. In the end, such short-term, high-violence tactics would even save Palestinian lives, they say.<sup>13</sup> Such views are sharply contradicted by explicit public statements from the Israeli Chief of Staff that the *intifada* cannot be ended by military means.

Sharon clearly sees expulsions as one of the most potent tools. He is ready now to withdraw the military government of the West Bank and immediately extend Israeli civil law over most parts of the terri-

<sup>12</sup>Based on interviews with senior Israeli officials in March 1988.

<sup>13</sup>Based on an interview with Sharon in March 1988. See also Joel Brinkley, “Sharon Says He Could Quell Uprising,” *New York Times*, November 9, 1988.

tories—tantamount to annexation, which is ruled out in the Camp David agreements. Although many Likud officials have been tempted by such an approach, they are restrained by fellow party members who are deeply concerned at the effect such a step would have upon Israel's ties with the United States and the world. The continuation of a national coalition government with Labor renders this scenario even less likely.

### ECONOMIC FACTORS

Finances play an important part in the struggle. Palestinian strikes and work boycotts in Israel affect the Israeli economy only slightly—they have caused the loss of only 2 percent of the GNP so far, according to an Israeli official calculation.<sup>14</sup> But tourism is down by one-third from pre-*intifada* days,<sup>15</sup> and a former Israeli Minister of Economy estimated that the total cost of the *intifada* to the Israeli economy in 1988 was over \$900 million.<sup>16</sup>

For the Palestinians, there is the critical question of surviving when means of income are lost. A high proportion of the West Bank and Gaza labor force commutes daily into Israel to work.<sup>17</sup> Refusal to work in Israel, denial of the right to work in Israel, or the inability to get to Israel because of disorder or closed checkpoints would leave those who are dependent upon *daily wages* particularly vulnerable. Arrangements are being made by local uprising committees to try to lessen the impact on the less-well-off, such as reducing rents and subsidizing other costs. Outside money is critical here. The PLO is intent on channeling funds to the resistance, so that resistance fighters can continue to live even when they are only partially employed or not employed at all.

The problem is how to channel money into the West Bank. Many observers have stated that despite severe crackdowns at border crossing points into Israel that drastically reduce the amount of money that can be brought into the West Bank, in this modern age of bank-

<sup>14</sup>Interview with a senior Israeli Labor party official, March 1988.

<sup>15</sup>Interview with an Israeli journalist specializing in West Bank affairs, January 1989.

<sup>16</sup>See Bishara, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>17</sup>One-half of the Gazan labor force (45,000 workers) and one-third of the West Bank labor force (about 55,000 workers) enter Israel every day to work. See Thomas L. Friedman, "Israel's Arab Army of Migrant Workers," *New York Times*, December 6, 1987.

ing, a coded phone call or even a little piece of paper is enough to establish credit arrangements.<sup>18</sup>

The problem for the PLO may have been somewhat alleviated at the June 1988 Arab summit in Algiers, specifically convoked to discuss Arab state policy toward the *intifada*—especially after the stunning failure of that same body to discuss the Palestinian question seriously at the previous summit in late 1987. The June 1988 summit earmarked over \$100 million specifically for support to the *intifada* and designated the PLO as the sole administrator of these funds.<sup>19</sup> This was a major political boost—however reluctantly granted—for the PLO, denying to Jordan or Syria or any other potential Arab “benefactor” a voice in the use of the funds. Indeed, the Palestinian movement has historically been characterized by the struggle to get free of manipulation by other Arab states and gain sole responsibility for the future of the Palestinians.

The uprising will probably be able to sustain at least *subsistence income* for the population, regardless of other Israeli pressures. But that may not be enough over the long haul.<sup>20</sup>

One of the ultimate ironies of the situation is that some Israeli banks have reportedly been important conduits for these monies—often unwittingly. Israeli bonds from abroad and similar other instruments are being used by Palestinians. Many Israelis are interested in smuggling hard currency out of the country, and this can serve West Bank needs as well. Finally, the ultra-orthodox Jewish community in Jerusalem—which believes that the very existence of a Jewish state before the coming of the Messiah is blasphemy—has on occasion consciously used its own financial channels to assist PLO transfers of funds.<sup>21</sup>

#### THE EFFECTS ON THE COMMUNITIES: THE EQUATION OF PAIN

Israel could probably put down the worst of the disorders for a while if it were willing to employ ruthless force and dedicate enough energy and manpower to the task. The critical question is, At what

<sup>18</sup>Interviews with Israeli journalists on the West Bank and a Palestinian activist, March 1988.

<sup>19</sup>See George D. Moffet, III, “Arab Leaders Generous with Words, but Skimp on Funds for PLO,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 10, 1988.

<sup>20</sup>Arafat has stated that the PLO spends more than \$50 million per month to make up for lost wages and medical costs of *intifada* activists (see Moffet, op. cit.).

<sup>21</sup>Interview with an Israeli journalist, March 1988.

cost to Israel? Would the kind of techniques required possibly exact prohibitive political costs from abroad—especially in the United States? Would the use of ruthless force only serve to increase controversy and political disagreement inside Israel? This question is at the heart of the decisive “equation of pain”—*who can inflict greater pain on whom?*

The equation of pain represents very different costs for each side. For the Palestinians, it is a matter of deaths, wounded, restrictions, harassment, expulsions, the blowing up of family homes, financial hardships, and difficulties in daily living.<sup>22</sup> For the Israelis, there are likely to be few casualties, but the pain would be measured in terms of *moral cost* to the state and the body politic, deep internal anxiety on the part of parents whose sons are approaching draft age and who face the prospect of having to beat and shoot civilian Arabs, the cost in relations with the United States and Europe—already negative—and the cost in terms of self-image and national purpose. The moral corrosion of this issue will continue to eat deeply away at Israel, a society that is highly sensitive to the moral and ethical issues involved.<sup>23</sup>

Many Israelis still feel they can live with the *intifada*, since it does not touch their daily lives directly. They recognize that they can no longer go to the West Bank, but many of them never did anyway. Western media no longer focus on every rock-throwing session, and international attention has moved on to other issues for the time being. But the conflict increasingly intrudes upon the national life, whether or not Israelis are directly touched by the *intifada*. For those Israelis who live near Arabs or encounter them in the course of their daily lives—usually Arabs engaged in menial labor in Israel—suspicions and fears can run deep. Each community nourishes the darkest visions of what the other community wishes to do to it. Polarization is increasing.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup>A Palestinian news service reported that in the first year of the *intifada* 433 Palestinians were killed and approximately 46,000 were injured; 49 Palestinians were deported; approximately 100,000 olive and citrus trees were uprooted; and 134 homes were blown up as punishment. (“Figures Speak for Themselves,” *Middle East International*, No. 345, March 3, 1989, p. 12.)

<sup>23</sup>This unhappiness has begun to reach overt expression within the ranks of the Army itself: Prime Minister Shamir was subjected in a public meeting to a litany of complaints from troops about “the torment they feel in subduing rebellious Arabs.” (See Daniel Williams, “West Bank Duty Torment, Soldiers Say,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1989.)

<sup>24</sup>For an especially penetrating discussion of this problem see Thomas L. Friedman, “My Neighbor, My Enemy, a Report from Israel,” *New York Times Magazine*, July 5, 1987.



If the costs of the occupation remain high or grow higher, what benefits might be seen to outweigh the costs for Israel? In the end, the main benefit of the occupation is the sheer physical possession of the land—for either security or ideological reasons—and the hope that somehow, sometime, the Palestinian problem will go away. But such an attitude implies either the benign (and naive) view that Palestinians will eventually give up the idea of a separate state and come around to living with Israelis in peace within one state, or the less benign view that time, and events as yet unforeseen, will eventually push out the Palestinian presence. The latter may be the hidden agenda, perhaps not even consciously, of those who believe they can hold on. Otherwise, access to the West Bank on a de facto basis for almost all Israelis is now over; enjoyment and use of the lands of Judea and Samaria that they see as their patrimony is already denied to them and their children. *The process of psychological Israeli withdrawal is almost complete.* As the tradeoffs grow starker over time, the Israelis will ultimately be forced to decide to get rid of either the West Bank or its inhabitants.

#### WHAT HAVE THE PALESTINIANS GAINED: DOES A "MORAL VICTORY" HELP?

The Palestinians, by all reports were absolutely buoyant for the first four to six months over what they believed they had accomplished. The *intifada* was already a victory in the Palestinian mind, *regardless of what happens in the future.*<sup>25</sup>

As the *intifada* moves well on into its second full year, however, much of the glamour and excitement is gone. Organizing and maintaining the struggle over the long term requires hard work and much personal sacrifice—and a growing toll in lives. But all observers agree that the Palestinians have now created a new folklore. They have proven that they can stand up to Israel. Indeed, Palestinians and even some Israelis notice a subtle role reversal that has occurred over the past year in the interrelationship of the two communities. Fear of the situation has gravitated out of the Palestinian camp and into the Israeli. The Palestinians now feel they have time on their side. Whereas Israel used to proclaim confidently that it was "creat-

<sup>25</sup>General Amram Mitzna, the Israeli military commander of the West Bank, states, "The *intifada* is a state of mind. The mood, the feeling, is that the Arabs have gained something. They are able to control their future. . . . It is impossible to take this from them, impossible." (Daniel Williams, "Israelis and Palestinians Dig In for a Long Struggle," *Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 1988.)

ing facts" on the West Bank with settlements, the West Bankers are now "creating facts" with the de facto closure of the area and the creation of new independent Palestinian civil institutions. West Bankers can enter Israel with relative freedom, while Israelis cannot enter the West Bank. Eschewing their former rejectionist politics, Palestinian leaders now say they want contact with Israelis, and they seek negotiations over the future of their state. (But they reject all contact with occupation authorities.) The Palestinians feel they have seized the psychological initiative. They see themselves as the "peace camp" that asks for rights and abjures the use of firearms, whereas Israel is denying rights, employing firepower, and developing a siege mentality. Palestinians now see the Israelis as the besieged rejectionists who react negatively to calls for greater flexibility.

This *psychological role-reversal* is the major new element created by the *intifada*. The occupation army is no longer seen as all-powerful. Palestinians feel they have acquired moral authority in the eyes of the Muslim world and even in Israel. This cannot be taken away. Martyrs only increase the sense of moral worth. This new mentality means that the West Bank Palestinians can and probably will remain committed to the struggle over the long haul—perhaps for decades—regardless of the punishment meted out. And many would argue that they have regained the most precious commodity of all—their self-respect. This ironically raises their status in the eyes of many Israelis, who now see them as "worthy" opponents for negotiation.

Is this the kind of self-respect—like Sadat's victory in crossing the Suez Canal and taking Israel by surprise in 1973—that translates into a self-confidence that can be cashed in for a peace settlement with Israel? The Palestinians believe they are now ready for settlement—if the terms involve a Palestinian state. There is a growing desire to translate revolutionary and moral gains into concrete political terms that will bring the West Bank closer to what its Arab citizens seek. But Israel itself is still far from that point. It is not ready to pay the price the Palestinians insist they must have. The fighting is therefore likely to persist at fairly high levels for some time.<sup>26</sup>

Even if Israel were able to marshal enough heavy force and impose enough strangling administrative measures to crush most overt oppo-

<sup>26</sup>A combined services Israeli intelligence estimate reportedly concluded that unless a [political] solution is found, "the unrest in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza strip could go on for years." (See Daniel Williams, "Israeli Intelligence Said to View PLO as a Talks Partner," *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 1989.)

sition, few believe the problem would be over. At best, it would only be submerged beneath the surface, awaiting the next opportunity to arise. Strangely, many Likud officials seem to feel that somehow they can get back to the status quo ante—at least in terms of suppression of violence. Most thoughtful Israelis, however, agree that the political and psychological status quo ante is gone forever. And worse, the relations between Palestinians and Jews have probably undergone a sharp *qualitative* deterioration that will defy repair as long as a political relationship of inequality exists.

Among the many costs already sustained by Israel is the deeply worrisome conduct of the Israeli Arabs. The 300,000 Palestinians with Israeli citizenship who live in Israel proper and in fact enjoy most rights of citizenship have clearly demonstrated broad support for the West Bank insurrection and have cooperated with it, either in shows of solidarity or with more concrete help. Over time, this solidarity has been on the increase—even though overt acts of violence by the Israeli Arab community have been relatively limited. Ironically, many Israelis had begun to feel that these Arabs had somehow “become different” and were beginning to be truly integrated into Israeli society.<sup>27</sup> Many of them have become fluent in Hebrew and have entered into professions within Israel; they are also represented in the Israeli Knesset. The Israeli hope was that their “Arabness” was somehow diminishing as the process of integration proceeded. That dream, that hope, has been shattered and probably will not come back. The uprising has demonstrated that Israeli Arabs feel a fundamental “Arabness” that will always run deeper than any satisfactory but superficial adaptation to Israeli life. Furthermore, the Israeli Arabs are stepping up their demands for full rights within Israeli society—including political agitation for their West Bank comrades.

Who loses from this? Some Israelis say the Palestinians do because they have now proven that they can “never be trusted.” Israel will be that much less likely now to ever accept a Palestinian state, they argue. Maybe so. But the converse could also be true. Can Israelis af-

<sup>27</sup>One of the more remarkable examples of this “integration” concerns Israeli Arab Antun Shammas, who recently published a widely hailed, quite remarkable novel about Palestinians who live as citizens in Israel proper. What makes the novel exceptional is that Shammas wrote it not in Arabic, but in Hebrew, even though he is bilingual. For all the beauty of his Hebrew style, Shammas is no less a Palestinian nationalist, but he does see himself as sharing his “Palestinianism” with Israelis who occupy the same land. (See Antun Shammas, *Arabesques*, Harper and Row, New York, 1988; see also Gerald Marzorati, “An Arab Voice in Israel,” *New York Times Magazine*, September 18, 1988.)

ford to keep within their Jewish state an element that can never be absorbed and that will always view the Israelis as conquerors who must be overcome—politically if not militarily? This question is on the minds of many. Did most Jews emigrate to Israel to live in a binational state with Arabs—who in two decades will start to outnumber the Jews—or did they come to live in a Jewish state?

The problem has now gone well beyond the political realm and into the personal. Many Israelis talk about walls of suspicion and even fear that have grown immeasurably between themselves and the Arabs since the *intifada*. Everyone is now aware that a fundamental struggle is under way in which no one can remain neutral. Formerly amicable or even warm relations between the two sides fall victim to the new strains. What for decades seemed to be a struggle between Israel and surrounding Arab states has now largely reverted to a communal conflict inside Israel. Even the old city of Jerusalem, relatively incident-free, emits too hostile an atmosphere for the comfort of most Israelis. Except for those zealots who have chosen to live deep within the West Bank for ideological reasons, the West Bank has in most ways ceased to exist in the lives of most Israelis.<sup>28</sup>

In short, any suppression of the uprising—even a temporarily successful suppression at whatever political cost—seems unlikely to constitute a long-range solution. There will be no going back to the status quo ante. Political lines have hardened, the stakes are higher, and decades of work groping toward a new moderation seems to have been undone. The mythology of the uprising will almost surely fuel another round of conflict.

Even more significantly, a sense of *West Bank Palestinian identity* has gradually developed and crystallized under the *intifada*. After all, any concept of an independent West Bank entity had been discouraged since 1948. Jordan never liked the idea, either while the West Bank was under its control, or later when it sought to regain the West Bank from Israel as part of its own territory. Jordan consistently tried to weaken any sense of independence there.<sup>29</sup> Israel, after gaining control of the territories in 1967, likewise sought to suppress any independent leadership, perceiving that as a challenge to itself. Finally, the PLO itself has never had any desire to see an alternative independent leadership arise among Palestinians.

<sup>28</sup>Nearly every Israeli interviewed categorically stated that the West Bank—including the popular Arab restaurants in East (Arab) Jerusalem—was no longer accessible in any practical sense.

<sup>29</sup>Emile Sahliyeh, *In Search of Leadership, West Bank Politics Since 1967*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1988, p. 13.

The last decade has thus witnessed a West Bank evolution toward a new identity of its own. This evolutionary process cannot be undone: It stands as a challenge to all the political forces that sought to hinder its emergence in the past.

### III. THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE *INTIFADA*

#### PHASE TWO IN THE UPRISING

If Phase One of the uprising involved stones and inchoate rage, it also gave birth to the important discovery that the vaunted Israeli army was ineffective in containing low-level, poorly armed disorders. But stones can only go so far. And after one year of the conflict, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) began turning to more indiscriminate use of often-lethal plastic bullets. Palestinian romanticism, zeal, and self-sacrifice cannot go on forever. They represent precious commodities that the leadership cannot afford to squander if it hopes to emerge with true political gains. A more political Phase Two is therefore now under way that attempts to build on the groundwork laid by the initial disorders. The uprising is moving increasingly into a state of institutionalization in which the bold heroics of stones must at least partially give way to the more important but less dramatic skills of organization and institution building. Acts of violence will continue, but they will serve primarily to keep alive the spirit, discipline, and public face of the movement.

Increasingly, the Palestinians are working to prove that they are masters of their own fate, that they can conduct the uprising without significant help from the outside. More than that, the leadership of the *intifada* is now intent upon eliminating all institutions of Israeli state power on the West Bank and supplanting them with new Palestinian institutions.<sup>1</sup> Thus, municipal officials appointed by the Israelis are being told to resign or risk reprisal.<sup>2</sup> Palestinian policemen are urged to retire from the force. Long-time informers are being struck down in back streets.<sup>3</sup> Where possible, the Palestinians are attempting to render the Israeli presence irrelevant in all senses. Any official contact with the local Israeli administration is avoided.

<sup>1</sup>See George D. Moffett, III, "Palestinian Unrest Plants New Roots," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 8, 1988.

<sup>2</sup>See Jonathan C. Randal, "Israeli-Appointed Gaza Mayor Reportedly Quits," *Washington Post*, March 27, 1988.

<sup>3</sup>See John Kifner, "Palestinians Turn Ire on Collaborators," *New York Times*, March 27, 1988; also Glenn Frankel, "Palestinian Lynched as Collaborator," *Washington Post*, February 25, 1988.

Of course, doing away with the Israeli institutions is not altogether possible. Palestinians who are teaching their neighbors how to grow their own vegetable gardens in order to be independent of the Israeli market are not engaged in a realistic process of replacing Israeli market mechanisms. But the symbolic significance of the act is great.<sup>4</sup> A *mentality of self-sufficiency* is being created. A sense of *psychological liberation* is being born—even where the Israelis are able to impose their own administration on unwilling subjects. The administrative and repressive power of the Israeli state is still immense, and it will not be crushed by the *intifada*. Only when a sufficient sense of the enormity of the political costs of remaining in the West Bank has been created in Israel will possible political flexibility emerge—if ever.

West Bank leaders have a long and hard task ahead of them in deciding where and how to challenge or eliminate Israeli administrative and economic instruments. But the process may have longer-term consequences in instilling in the population a greater sense of unity, national destiny, and self-confidence. The Palestinians have taken over almost total responsibility for education, including the use of new textbooks that educate the children about the *intifada* and the nature and history of the Palestinian national movement. Health and social welfare programs are almost entirely in Palestinian hands.<sup>5</sup> Youth militias have reportedly been organized throughout the entire West Bank, and all youths know exactly to which unit they belong and who their commanders are. Programs of civil disobedience are also well under way.<sup>6</sup> Will the population have the commitment to follow through for the long haul? Will the uprising essentially be able to avoid the use of firearms over the long run—a discipline that so far has served them well? Phase Two, with all its implications, will be much harder to realize than were the heady accomplishments of Phase One. And it will be much less photogenic for the foreign media. But in the end, it is more important than stones.

<sup>4</sup>A classic example of this new exercise in self-sufficiency—and the Israeli government's strongly negative reaction to it—is contained in an article by Glenn Frankel, "Israel's War on Vegetables, Farmer Seen Sowing Seeds of Unrest," *The Washington Post*, June 11, 1988. Frankel details the banning by Israeli officials of one Palestinian farmer's efforts to teach others to grow vegetables in their own backyards in order to boycott the Israeli market mechanism.

<sup>5</sup>Interview with a Palestinian political activist in Jerusalem, January 1989.

<sup>6</sup>Interview with an Israeli journalist who specializes in West Bank affairs, January 1989.

## PALESTINIANS AND THE LEADERSHIP PROBLEM

Israeli leadership constantly speaks of the frustrations of trying to find an "interlocutor," a leadership among the Palestinians with whom it can deal on West Bank issues. Yet even here, Israeli policy harbors deep contradictions. On the one hand, Israel has always moved sharply to *eliminate* any nascent, independent-minded leadership on the West Bank that would constitute challenge to Israeli control. Arrests and deportations have historically decapitated the West Bank political leadership. Other Palestinians with ability and courage—including many with possible leadership potential—have long since left the West Bank to follow responsible professional careers in the Gulf states or in the West as managers, lawyers, businessmen, and technicians.<sup>7</sup> An experiment in the free election of municipal leaders in the West Bank died in 1976, when Israel saw it opening the door to increased PLO influence.<sup>8</sup> Many Israelis felt that they must find some local leadership to negotiate with—if only to avoid the extremely distasteful prospect of dealing with the PLO. Yet that opportunity now seems to have been missed. Occupation authorities are still in the process of arresting nearly all local activists, virtually guaranteeing that there will not be any local leadership to deal with. Hardline policy is making the PLO the *de facto* interlocutor by default.

The uprising has posed a new "good news/bad news" syndrome for Israel. The bad news is that much of the new leadership, still only dimly identified in the shadowy world of the young street fighters, has seemed initially more fanatic and extremist than the external PLO leadership. Portions of it are strongly oriented toward Islam, and many advocate the restoration of *all of Palestine* to Palestinian control. The good news for Israel is that this largely unknown and unseasoned leadership is in some respects a rival to, or able to take issue with, the PLO leadership abroad. In principle, it could come one day to constitute that "independent leadership" on the West Bank that the Israelis claim they have been looking for all along—except that it will never present the malleability that Israel had been hoping for. And it will not settle for what Israel proposes to offer.

<sup>7</sup>In 1985, it was estimated that some 600,000 Palestinians, a quarter of the diaspora, were in the Arab Gulf states, nearly all in professional capacities. (See Eric Rouleau, "The Palestinian Diaspora in the Gulf," *MERIP Reports*, No. 132, May 1985, p. 14.)

<sup>8</sup>Sahliyeh, *op. cit.*, p. 67.



## EXTERNAL VS. INTERNAL LEADERSHIP

A subtle and complex tension thus exists between the external and internal leadership: First, as with any military campaign or group of activists abroad under a centralized but distant leadership, there are tensions *between the external and internal command*. Those on the scene think they know the local situation better than those commanding from afar and believe they can better call the shots. But "Headquarters" still attempts to impose itself on the fighters in the field.

Second, there is a *distinct generation gap* between the youths on the street and the greybeards that make up the PLO leadership. The younger generation, most of which knows only the Israeli occupation, is vastly more impatient with the situation than the previous, defeated generation is.<sup>9</sup>

Third, a *social revolution* is under way among West Bank Palestinians themselves. Deep resentments are welling up against the old elites that not only have constituted the traditional leadership on the West Bank, but have also executed the occupation policies of the Israelis or the Jordanians. These newer elements represent in part a different class—the workers, the poor farmers, the refugees—that is rebelling not only against Israeli occupation, but also against those Palestinian social classes that have dominated them for so long and have been quiescent and supine before the Israeli occupier. Youth and students lie at the heart of the new activity. Women also are finding in the *intifada* an opportunity to take up important new social roles; the uprising has created an environment for greater expression of independence in the form of a women's movement and political activism.<sup>10</sup>

Fourth, a *political-ideological* struggle exists among various West Bank elements and will probably grow. The West Bank leftists reportedly stayed out of the uprising during the first few weeks because they saw it as right-wing and religiously inspired, and they did not wish to strengthen those forces.<sup>11</sup> The sweep of events forced recon-

<sup>9</sup>Ned Temko, "Palestinian Parents and Israeli Army on Defensive as Teen-Agers Lead Unrest," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 15, 1988.

<sup>10</sup>These observations are based on interviews with Israeli observers and Palestinian activists in Jerusalem in March 1988 and January 1989. Also see Robin Wright, "Youth, Religion, and Radicalism Give New Twist to Palestinian Movement," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 1988; and Daniel Williams, "Israelis and Palestinians Dig In for a Long Struggle, Year-old Intifada a Way of Life: Permanent Social Change," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 5, 1988.

<sup>11</sup>Based on an interview with a Palestinian leftist, March 1988.

sideration of that position. Dwindling pro-Jordanian elements also had doubts about the wisdom of the uprising but were forced by the flow of events to join in.

Fifth, the Islamic movement is growing in strength. It is strongest in Gaza, where it has long been under the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. More recently, however, the influence of the Iranian-style orientation of the Islamic Jihad has grown. Israeli officials believe there is no serious evidence of direct Iranian support for the Islamic movement, although there is always the "demonstration effect" of the Iranian revolution and Iran's current strong vocal support for the uprising.<sup>12</sup>

The new alternative leadership on the West Bank is still largely faceless. Few clear-cut figures or spokesmen have emerged who can be identified as leaders. Much of this is deliberate: The leadership is institutionalized locally so that when one activist is arrested, his place is taken by another. There is no pyramidal form of organization susceptible to decapitation. The local leadership is overwhelmingly under 25 years of age. Local leadership tends to represent the usual cross-section of Palestinian politics: division into Fatah (Arafat), the Popular Democratic Front (George Habash), the Democratic Front (Nayif Hawatmeh), and the Communist Party of Palestine. More recently, Islamic groups—always present but less politically active in the past—also represent an element of leadership. The strength of different factions varies from area to area. When activists are arrested, they can usually be replaced in the umbrella organization of the unified Leadership of the Uprising. Mass arrests can only hope to catch some percentage of the key activists.<sup>13</sup>

The task of the local leadership is basically to keep the *intifada* going. A skilled upper echelon that can make complex political decisions is not required at this stage. This is why the leadership of the *intifada* really cannot be decapitated. The strategic political leadership resides primarily in the external PLO, which issues its directives to the fighters on the ground. The local fighters will take orders from the external leadership, but the external command must be careful that its directives are within the bounds of political reality for the West Bank. And as the local committees keep the struggle going,

<sup>12</sup>Based on interviews with Israeli officials in March 1988 and January 1989.

<sup>13</sup>Interviews with Israeli military security officials, March 1988.

they also feel they have the right to ask when the external command will translate their struggle into concrete gain.<sup>14</sup>

Other personalities also figure in the movement. Many internationally known West Bank intellectuals or traditional figures of prominence appear as public spokesmen for the *intifada*. They meet with foreigners and help further the political message of the uprising, but they have extremely limited independent authority and cannot speak for the movement beyond what is permitted to them. Many of them are old-time political figures who carry virtually no weight with the new leadership.<sup>15</sup> But the problem for the new leadership is precisely that: It lacks publicly recognized figures with broad political experience and stature who can step forward in a "national context" to speak for the West Bank. The *external* PLO still has a monopoly on most of those capabilities—and it would just as soon not see any comparable figure of power and authority emerge on the West Bank.

Nearly everyone cites the Israeli prison system—much like the old British colonial prisons—as the chief breeding ground for new leadership. Arrestees who had perhaps operated only on the local level are suddenly thrown in with large numbers of activists from elsewhere in the West Bank. Their sense of solidarity is increased, experiences are exchanged, and networks are established. The movement becomes more national.<sup>16</sup>

These new forces reject the West Bank status quo. They have broken the old myth of West Bank passivity. They have created the new folklore of resistance, with its new heroes and martyrs. They reject the old West Bank leadership. They reject Jordan. They view warily the PLO leadership abroad that did little to realize the gains that the new leadership is now accomplishing. They fear the old PLO could even sell them out or unrealistically hold out for something more than a Palestinian state on the West Bank—or even waste decades more on the "international struggle" and leave the West Bankers stewing in their own juices. The West Bank leadership is sending messages to the PLO that it wants the results of the uprising to be translated into a concrete political program which can be negotiated now.

<sup>14</sup>See Daniel Williams, "Young West Bank Arabs Want Decisive Action by PLO—or Else," *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 1988; also Joel Greenberg, "Palestinians Want Action, West Bank Arabs Press PLO for Daring Peace Moves," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 3, 1988.

<sup>15</sup>See Ziad Abu 'Amr, "Notes on Palestinian Political Leadership, The 'Personalities' of the Occupied Territories," *Middle East Report*, September-October 1988.

<sup>16</sup>See George D. Moffett, III, "Prison Detentions Nourish Rather than Halt Arab Unrest," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 17, 1988.

The PLO leadership, of course, recognizes that as magnificent as the uprising has been for the Palestinians, as genuine as its accomplishments are, it has not yet achieved sufficient power either to challenge Israel for possession of the West Bank or to force Israel into negotiations over a possible West Bank state. In the mainstream PLO view, it will be a long time before Israel will be ready to negotiate a West Bank Palestinian state. In the interim, the *intifada* will have to slog forward, creating "new facts" that will make the new West Bank institutions relatively permanent until the moment of truth, when Israel will either be ready to accept a West Bank state or will pay the price required to crush the movement for another few years.

In the end, Western plans for improving the "quality of life" of the West Bank—the major vehicle of former Secretary of State Shultz's policy for dealing with the West Bank problem—will probably have no effect on the minds of the Palestinians. Improved living standards will not help separate the internal from the external command. No amount of economic assistance is going to cause the Palestinian leadership either to give up the goals of the uprising or to settle for something less. They have not come this far and struggled for so many years to do that.

The external leadership of the PLO, in its turn, has had to run very hard to catch up with the new realities. On the one hand, it has felt compelled to increase its own radical rhetoric to keep the new uprising from slipping from its grasp. Indeed, the external leadership has always been hobbled by the need to formulate policy by committee through its loose coalition of factions—whose political balance at any one time is directly reflected in West Bank politics. The external leadership must now demonstrate that it is fully aware of the West Bank goals and can play a decisive role in achieving them. Otherwise it may be doomed to irrelevancy.

### THE PLO AS SYMBOL

As the *intifada* flourished and spread in 1988, a distinction developed between the PLO as an actual body of personalities under the command of Arafat, and the PLO as a *powerful symbol of Palestinian resistance and unity*. Nearly everyone agrees that the symbol of the PLO still commands the sympathies and loyalty of nearly all Palestinians. There is no other such symbol. But that does not mean that Arafat can call all the shots. The PLO, for all its warts, has consistently reflected an internal process of democratic procedure and consensus-building. Arafat will have to struggle to maintain a

dominant influence on the West Bank, even if in principle "PLO leadership" is widely accepted. Indeed, most Palestinians now ritualistically say "we are all PLO." In one sense, this statement of allegiance alleviates the old Israeli dilemma of trying to find Palestinians to talk to who are *not* PLO: Now there are almost none.

Yet the elements of social revolution in the *intifada* are far from universally pleasing to all Palestinians. A part of the old-guard leadership, both on the West Bank and outside, initially deplored the uprising; the positions of these individuals as traditional leaders and elites are profoundly threatened. This particularly includes some of those elements loyal to Jordan. Indeed, Israeli security officials mentioned that in the beginning some of the old guard even offered Israeli authorities advice about how to put down the uprising and suggested that the Israelis had not been tough enough. They felt they were losing out in the new world of the uprising.<sup>17</sup> But these groups are probably a distinct minority. Nearly everyone else probably harbors mixed feelings: pride in the uprising as a great accomplishment that ushers in a new phase of the struggle, the surge of adrenalin at the momentousness of the new events, deep anxiety about the personal and family costs imposed by the uprising, and overall worry about what the future may hold. Those with negative views have learned to keep those views to themselves, not daring to thwart the new nationalistic spirit pervading the land. (Indeed, in any revolution—including the American—the leadership invariably drags along a sizable reluctant group that is more comfortable with the status quo.)

These new factors of social revolution—not unique to the West Bank, but occurring throughout most of the Arab world—*represent permanent shifts in the social order*, for better or for worse. Under these circumstances, the old-time seasoned leadership of the PLO may well start looking better to the Israelis than the revolutionary and radical zeal of the younger street fighters—Islamic or not.

### THE ULTIMATE GOAL: A STATE

What will the Palestinians bargain for eventually? The demand for a Palestinian state is almost surely nonnegotiable in the eyes of most Palestinians by now. They have not come this far and waited so long for something less. Yet some Western observers would argue that the "Palestinian tragedy" lies in the Palestinians' decades-long failure to

<sup>17</sup>Interviews with Israeli officials, March 1988.

accept the various deals that have been put to them. But patently, most Palestinians believe there is *no tragedy* in turning down deals if the right deal has not yet come along. Most seem ready to face the hardships that come with the stubborn insistence that time is on their side—and that they will ultimately prevail. In effect, they are not concerned that the “train has left the station” without them in the past; there will be other trains, and they will continue to wait until the right train comes along.

Many Israeli politicians admit that this scenario is entirely possible, but they are more optimistic. They believe that the negotiating environment could be radically affected if real Palestinian-Israeli talks could ultimately begin and if concrete steps could be taken to improve Palestinian life and—above all—to end the Israeli military occupation. They feel that if the occupation was lifted off Palestinian backs, the Palestinians would soon mellow and begin to see the advantages, the relief, the benefits, of even limited autonomy, which could evolve over time into something better.<sup>18</sup> The sticking point is that Israel wants to define the Palestinian interlocutors—who usually don’t represent what “real” Palestinians want. As Arafat spokesman Bassam Abu Sharif has pointed out, the Palestinians would rather negotiate with “Peace Now” in Israel, just as the Israelis would rather negotiate with the old pro-Jordanian Palestinian leadership.<sup>19</sup> But neither group can have its wish.

And who would these “real” Palestinians be, anyway? Israelis are right when they point out that many Palestinians have been cowed, intimidated, or even assassinated by the PLO in the past. Too many potential Palestinian leaders have met death at the hands of assassins from one or another radical Palestinian faction. All the while, the PLO can exercise powerful influence through its exercise of the power of the purse in disbursing funds on the West Bank. Historically, it does not pay to cross the PLO. Still other Palestinians prefer stability and order and do not welcome the spectacle of their sons and daughters going out to commit violence. Others fear for their own welfare and that of their families and know that every revolution exacts a toll on all.

<sup>18</sup>This has been more the conservative Labor position, i.e., that once conditions are alleviated and the actual fighting is put down, unanticipated things might happen on the Palestinian side. Much of this discussion is based on interviews with Israeli Labor and Likud party officials.

<sup>19</sup>See the important June 1988 article by Bassam Abu Sharif, available from the PLO Information Office.

Yet to cite these very plausible cases of ambivalence and uncertainty among much of the Palestinian population is simply politically irrelevant. "The silent majority" is almost never the moving force in political and social movements. As much as considerable elements of the Palestinian population may feel ambivalent about the uprising, they are part of it. Their children are dragging them into it more deeply. Each further drop of bloodshed deepens the commitment of those who might have preferred to stay out of it. The West Bank has become a closed, self-contained political entity, a forge that is remolding the character of Palestinian politics. The politically active elements we are now witnessing have *become* the Palestinian revolution and are accepted as such by nearly all the population, regardless of their trepidations. Israel can no longer bank on a "more reasonable silent majority," simply because the cause is no longer in the hands of the old "moderates." Israel is fighting a losing battle in denying leadership to all but its preferred "moderates."

Many Israelis, especially those in Likud, believe that if calm can be restored, some kind of deal is possible. The course of events during the past twenty years, however, suggests that they are indulging in wishful thinking. Events, developments, can never be reversed. Mental corners have been turned and there is no road back, especially when the developments take on overtones of a nationalist liberation movement. Even if the uprising is brutally crushed, most Palestinians will simply feed on their memories and recount the new folklore and myths of the *intifada* until the next opportunity arises. They will accept sullen subjugation rather than settle for a lesser deal that denies them what they feel is their birthright and the symbol of their very being. There is very little in the long history of the Palestinian national movement to suggest otherwise.

## IV. JORDAN: THE ELUSIVE PARTNER

### THE JORDANIAN OPTION

With the outbreak of the *intifada*, the clearest losers in the uprising were already the Jordanians. The *intifada* made explicit what any examination of the history of the West Bank since 1967 demonstrated anyway: there almost never was a realistic Jordanian option. King Hussein, after playing with the idea of taking control of the West Bank for years at U.S. behest, finally gave it the *coup de grace* himself. The Jordanians are not remembered fondly for their previous control of the West Bank, from 1948 to 1967.<sup>1</sup> The new generation on the West Bank has never lived under Jordan, and Amman is irrelevant to their life and aspirations. As one older leftist Palestinian leader said, "We are not about to walk out of one cage and into another"—in reference to the West Bank possibly reverting from Israeli control back to Jordan.<sup>2</sup> Few Palestinians want the Jordanian option, although most recognize that it would at least gain them autonomy. The plum of autonomy is long past its prime and whets no appetites; West Bankers are looking for something more substantial—something they know Jordan cannot give them.

Despite the clear demise of Jordan's influence on the West Bank, the Israeli Labor party mortgaged its future almost entirely to the Jordanian option, in its desperate attempt to find an interlocutor—any interlocutor—to take over the management of the West Bank. Likud has been far less enamored of Jordan, but it recognized that somebody might have to take some responsibility for the West Bank even if the area remained entirely under Israeli sovereignty forever. Since King Hussein will not now come forth to represent the Palestinians in any capacity, Labor has been the big loser—as reflected in its poor showing in the November 1988 elections.

### THE VIEW FROM AMMAN

Amman itself has been profoundly ambivalent toward the uprising. Jordan desperately wants peace because anything less than that is

<sup>1</sup>For an excellent and balanced presentation and analysis of evolving West Bank attitudes toward Jordan, see "The West Bank Under Jordan's Rule," Chap. 2 in Sahliyeh, *In Search of Leadership*, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with a Palestinian leftist intellectual, Jerusalem, March 1988.



destabilizing. Another potential Arab-Israeli war cannot be ruled out, and the prospect of expulsion of a million and a half West Bank Palestinians into Jordan remains. But the Jordanians by now have recognized that they can never seek to represent the Palestinians in any way. They are furthermore well aware of the pitfalls of any Jordanian return to a role of security force on the West Bank.<sup>3</sup>

If there are ever any negotiations with Israel under the unlikely scenario of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, Jordan will negotiate with Israel solely on bilateral Jordanian-Israeli issues; Jordan will insist the Palestinians themselves conduct any negotiations over the West Bank territories. *If any Palestinian land is to be given away, it must be the Palestinians who give up their own patrimony, not Jordan.*

One wonders how much the Jordanian government really still wants the West Bank in any case. If it could have it back under pre-1967 conditions—i.e., tight Jordanian control—it might have been interested. But Jordan could read the tea leaves as well as anyone else, as anti-Jordanian feelings ripened under the Israeli occupation and a new sense of Palestinian separateness emerged. Jordan had probably been playing along with the Jordan option—so dear to U.S. policymakers—in part because it was the only way to keep the United States engaged over the years and it helped keep other challengers for the West Bank off guard.<sup>4</sup> The King recognizes that a radicalized West Bank population—perhaps freely electing delegates to the Jordan Parliament under some confederal plan—would pose a threat of radicalization to Jordan itself. In short, the West Bank is an uncertain prize.

### JORDAN WASHES ITS HANDS

King Hussein's formal renunciation in July 1988 of any claims to the West Bank or the right to represent it, along with the severing of administrative ties and responsibilities to the area, represents the logical culmination of these trends. Numerous factors came into play in the formal decision:

<sup>3</sup>Much of this analysis is based on interviews with Jordanian senior officials in March 1988.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Don Peretz, "The 'Jordan Option': An Illusion Played Out," *Los Angeles Times*, August 4, 1988.

- Recognition that Jordan had been losing its constituency on the West Bank over decades and lost it completely with the *intifada* and the new spirit of Palestinian independence.
- A reaffirmation by the Arab Summit Meeting of July 1988 that Arafat and the PLO are still the sole representatives of the Palestinian people and have sole responsibility for the disbursement of Arab monies.
- Realistic recognition by Jordan that insistence on a subordinate role for the PLO in a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation would be seen as an effort to dominate the Palestinians—a prospect that is no longer tenable after the *intifada*—and perhaps dangerous to the security of Jordan itself.
- A desire to punish the United States for a decade of slights, and a rejection of Washington's long-held unrealistic preference for excluding the PLO and creating a Jordanian delegation containing only tame Palestinians.
- An effort to throw the entire problem into Arafat's lap to let him see if he can do any better by the West Bank Palestinians than Jordan did.<sup>5</sup>

In short, King Hussein would seem to be bowing to the current forces at work on the West Bank and in the Arab world. While the PLO could yet fail to accomplish anything significant for the West Bank, it is probable that the Jordanian era there is over. Yet, ironically, if a Palestinian state ever comes into being, it will have to seek association with Jordan if it is to be viable and maintain a bridge to the rest of the Arab world. It is critically important to the Palestinians that any such association be voluntary, negotiated, and freely arrived at by a sovereign state. The Palestinians simply will not allow themselves to be "delivered" to Jordan.

Jordan subsequently moved to reassure the United States, Israel, and Egypt that it is not opting out altogether from the peace process, and that it still seeks a peaceful settlement with Israel and could still be interested in some kind of confederation with the West Bank. But the King will not go back on his determination not to *represent* the Palestinians—short of some incredible development such as the disappearance of the PLO. The Israelis and the Palestinians are left facing each other.

<sup>5</sup>For an excellent analysis of some of these complex factors, see Yehoshafat Harkabi, "Hussein's West Bank Shock Strategy," *Washington Post*, Outlook Section, August 7, 1988.

## **JORDAN AND THE PALESTINIAN STATE**

A West Bank transition to an independent Palestinian state is likely to be fraught with problems for Jordan as well as Israel. Jordan is particularly sensitive to Sharon's statement that "Jordan is Palestine." On one level, Sharon's comment is deeply perceptive of long-range future trends:

- The Palestinians already constitute more than two-thirds of the population in Jordan.
- Most of Jordan's urbanized and professional classes are Palestinian.
- In demographic terms, the Palestinians are likely to emerge eventually as the dominant political force of Jordan.
- Palestinian families in Jordan enjoy intimate historic and clan ties with the West Bank.

On a more operational level, however, Sharon's statement is menacing and destabilizing. However the demographics of Jordan eventually sort themselves out, Sharon would "hasten history along" by precipitating a demise of the Hashemites designed to lead to an early Palestinian showdown with Jordan's East Bankers and bedouin elites—with the goal of turning Jordan into a Palestinian state. Israel could then engage in the final showdown with the new Palestinian state, defeat it, and find an address at which to deposit the current Palestinian Arab population of the West Bank. Fortunately, Sharon's vision does not find many supporters—even within his own party.

Sharon's scheme is, of course, designed to obviate the necessity of Israel ever having to give up territory on the West Bank. A "gentler" version of the Sharon vision suggests that once the new Palestinian state is firmly in the saddle in Jordan, then Israel will be in a position to negotiate more generously the status of the heavily Arab-populated portions of the West Bank—portions which could then revert to the control of the new Palestinian state in former Jordan. The rationale would be that the portions of the West Bank that Israel would actually return are so minimal that no state could possibly be viably created out of them. If only those portions were to become a separate state, every square inch would be the subject of bitter negotiation with Israel, given the area's importance to the West Bankers. If those same portions of territory were under negotiation between Israel and the new Palestinian state in former Jordan, they would be vastly less

important in proportion to the size of the overall Jordanian state they would be joining. This scheme too, of course, requires that Jordan become "Palestinianized" under the departure of the Hashemites—with all the destabilization that implies.

Thus, Jordan cannot view the future of the non-Palestinian East Bankers in Jordan with anything but anxiety when facing the future. The King cannot afford to attempt domination of the West Bank, nor can he afford any longer to compete openly with the PLO for political leadership there. And he cannot tolerate the expulsion of the Palestinians from the West Bank—which could only spell the immediate demise of the Hashemite family. Hussein, a leader of real character, integrity, and capability, is in many ways in a no-win situation; the forces of history over the long run militate against perpetual Hashemite rule. Such a long-term observation, however, does not mean that one wishes to hasten history along, especially toward a period of undesirable turbulence. The West is extremely unlikely to help Sharon operationalize any aspects of his historic insight.

On the other hand, it cannot be utterly ruled out that King Hussein might ultimately come to see the value of presiding over the transformation of Hashemite rule into a non-monarchical democracy of which he would become the founding father and first president. Such a political arrangement might possibly smooth the transition into a Palestinian state based on demographic reality and on democratic decision. That transition might provoke considerable disorder within Jordan as well, however, and there is no guarantee that the West Bankers would not view this as simply a subtler version of the Jordan option trap. It might also be taken by the Israeli right as a pretext for failing to hand over any significant part of the territories. The PLO would also see the scheme as an effort to eliminate it entirely from the process. It is likely that the PLO would have major influence over the West Bankers' willingness to reject or negotiate such a "new Palestinian state" on the East Bank. Whatever the many problems this bold concept contains, it does have the advantage of providing a Palestinian *state* interlocutor which could then bargain for the territories on the West Bank with greater authority than could Hashemite Jordan.

Given the revolutionary zeal and the destabilizing character of the uprising at this point, it is not surprising that many East Bankers and a few Jordanian-Palestinians at the outset seemed to be secretly

rooting for the Israelis to put down the uprising.<sup>6</sup> But nearly all Arabs, including most Jordanians, also derive a sense of pride from watching the Palestinians take on Israeli forces with so much success. Feelings of solidarity will always run deep, even when there is deep ambivalence over the political implications.

### IMPLICATIONS OF JORDAN'S WITHDRAWAL

The implications of Hussein's washing his hands of the West Bank are far-reaching and profound. The King's move is basically strategic and not tactical, and its full implications will take some time to emerge. This development is a historic watershed in which several major shifts have already taken place:

- Israel can no longer talk about the Jordan option—a particularly severe blow to Labor.
- The cornerstone of the U.S. Middle East peace policy is now gone; the United States must return to the drawing boards for a new approach.
- The West Bank can no longer be viewed by any Israelis as Jordanian; it is clearly now a Palestinian entity—and one striving on its own to develop the de facto trappings of a state.
- By the same token, the King has served notice to Israel that Jordan is not Palestine either, making it harder for Sharon to attempt to implement his vision of the “final solution” to the Palestinian problem.
- The Palestinians on the West Bank have been cast loose totally on their own—without even the administrative assistance of Jordan. This will heighten their sense of independence and self-reliance—characteristics notably lacking in the past when they waited for some *deus ex machina* to deliver salvation from the outside.
- The Palestinian-Israeli issue has been shorn of nearly all external complications; it has been reduced to an issue the two parties must resolve themselves—as the PLO now states. Israel may insist that the PLO is in fact an “external party,” but the West Bank population will not see it that way and will insist upon its participation both symbolically and practically.
- A moment of truth for the PLO has arrived. The PLO now faces the responsibility of assuming Jordan's role of financing

<sup>6</sup>Based on interviews in Jordan, March 1988.

the administration of the West Bank. Can the PLO demonstrate competence in assisting the West Bank here? The money will come from the Arab world, but the funding mechanism will rest with the PLO—covertly. Other funding mechanisms might come via the UN, but Israel will be loath to allow the UN to help sustain Palestinian moves toward increased independence.

- Israel has an opportunity to try to demonstrate the irrelevance of the PLO by assuming responsibility for the administrative costs—a role that the West Bank Palestinians are particularly anxious to remove from Israeli hands. Israel will surely attempt to deny the PLO any role in providing funding and to starve out the West Bank financially in the hopes of forcing it to return to Israel for support.
- In the end, Jordan's step in cutting the umbilical cord will probably hasten the creation of an independent West Bank administration and encourage the establishment of further nascent state institutions. But the transition process is likely to be painful and violent.
- If the PLO cannot deliver the kind of funding and political support the West Bank needs, its relevance in West Bank politics will be sharply undercut and it will have limited ability to determine the character and direction of the movement.
- The PLO, to maintain its role on the West Bank, must therefore continue to move politically toward some kind of constructive political handling of the West Bank situation. The West Bankers are impatient and will probably not indefinitely tolerate any PLO unwillingness to make the West Bank the highest-priority issue of the movement. The West Bank will have limited tolerance for the particular dynamics of PLO politics, if they simply involve more foot-dragging in the agonizingly slow process of seeking consensus among external Palestinian forces. The dynamism of the *intifada* could threaten the PLO with true irrelevancy.

## V. PALESTINE: THE OPTIONS

### THE "PALESTINIAN OPTION": WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

With the demise of the Jordanian option, only the "Palestinian option" is inescapably left. But how will Israel treat it? Israel must decide first what *real* options it has for the ultimate disposition of the territories. At present, it still thinks in terms of at least two options: Palestinian autonomy within the Israeli state, or Palestinian statehood.

*Autonomy* clearly implies that the Palestinians of the West Bank will eventually settle for less than a state. Yet this proposition is highly unlikely, given the evolution and dynamics of Palestinian politics over the past many years. Palestinian acquiescence to autonomy implies that Israel must either successfully crush the *intifada* or entice the Palestinians into the willing abandonment of PLO leadership. Because of the importance of the PLO as a symbol of independence, it is almost inconceivable that it would be abandoned. It is possible, however, that West Bankers may in the end decide to negotiate with Israel on their own, in the name of the PLO, as local PLO representatives. But such negotiation would still aim at the eventual establishment of a state. The Palestinians could take such a step in the belief that the PLO itself was too paralyzed to take the necessary political action to assist them.

If Israel were to acquiesce to the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state, it would have to decide *to whom* the leadership of the state would be entrusted, what the boundaries would be, and what the relationship of the state would be to Israel in political, economic, and military/security terms. Numerous studies have already begun to look into these issues in Israel.

In one sense, the Palestinian state on the West Bank represents a conservative compromise between the maximalist positions of both parties. For the PLO, it represents the definitive jettisoning of territorial aspirations for a broader Palestinian state that would occupy all of Palestine. It also represents the *ideological* abandonment of radical Palestinian ideology that sees the "Palestinian revolution" as an integral part of an "Arab revolution" designed to recast the entire character of political and social relations in the Middle East. It represents settlement for a distinctly finite and modest state that will reflect largely bourgeois values of the status quo. For the Israelis too,

acceptance of such a state represents the territorial and ideological compromise of their own grander vision of Israel.

#### NEW PLO POLITICAL STEPS: DECLARATION OF A STATE AND A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE

Inspired, or perhaps stung, by the spontaneous power of the *intifada*, the PLO has been compelled to take new political steps. The first such step was the declaration of a Palestinian state and the necessary government-in-exile that it implies.<sup>1</sup> The declaration of a state was a key goal of the West Bankers, who saw it as the first clear-cut statement that the West Bank constitutes a formal Palestinian state in itself. The declaration furthermore tacitly acknowledged that the West Bank Palestinian state will not be hostage to, or held up by, the broader issues of the Palestinian diaspora's right of return. Historically, the PLO has avoided the concept of government-in-exile for fear that it would prove more divisive than unifying, that it would unleash rivalries for a limited number of positions and serve to dissolve the PLO itself.<sup>2</sup> As of this writing, the PLO had not gone beyond selecting Arafat as President of the Palestinian state; the selection of other officials is apparently still too controversial.<sup>3</sup>

The second step taken by the PLO, in mid-December 1988 under pressure of the *intifada*, was acceptance of UN Resolutions 242 and 338, recognizing Israel's existence and right to exist within secure borders, and a renunciation of terrorism; UN Resolution 181, from 1947, was also recognized, solely on the grounds that it calls for the establishment of two states—one Arab and one Jewish—within Palestine. This critically important step of unconditional recognition of Israel unlocked the long-closed door to direct and official contact between the United States and the PLO. With the immense symbolic weight of the United States shifting over to *de facto* recognition of the PLO, the PLO has now acquired a legitimacy that is of critical importance to its future dealings with Israel. A new political dynamic has been unleashed that almost surely will ultimately compel Israel to

<sup>1</sup>See Michael Ross, "PLO Proclaims Palestinian State," *Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 1988.

<sup>2</sup>Elaine Ruth Fletcher, Joel Greenberg, Ben Lynfield, and agencies, "Palestinians Split over Government-in-Exile," *Jerusalem Post*, August 4, 1988, quoted in FBIS NES, August 4, 1988. Radical elements in particular feared that a government-in-exile would lead to premature renunciation of territorial claims.

<sup>3</sup>See Michael Ross, "PLO Gives Arafat New Title: President," *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1989.



talk to the PLO—a slippery slope that most Israelis recognize as leading to acceptance of Palestinian self-determination. That is, after all, what the PLO has been about all these years.

These very significant recent political moves by the PLO suggest that it is well aware of its vulnerability on these issues and feels compelled to move to meet them. In a sense, there is a danger for the PLO that a West Bank PLO could take over the broader PLO organization. Or might this not be part of a natural evolution of that organization in any case?

### PROBLEMS FACING THE PLO

**Whom does the PLO represent?** Arafat must decide whether or not the West Bank is to be the vehicle for the ambitions of *all* Palestinians. The West Bankers are happy to settle for their own state on the West Bank, but the Palestinians in the diaspora are still vitally interested in the question of their own identity as well. They want a state (an identity), a passport, and a sense of belonging, after being treated as second-class citizens, or worse, all over the Arab world for more than 40 years. A settlement that satisfied only the narrower interests of the Palestinians on the West Bank would expose the PLO to serious internal stress and divisions. How far can Arafat compromise the interests of the Palestinian diaspora—especially those elements in the refugee camps of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan—in the interests of gaining the West Bank state? One Israeli scholar estimates there are probably 800,000 Palestinians in camps who could legitimately call for a right to return to live in a West Bank state.<sup>4</sup> In the end, it will be the decision of the sovereign Palestinian state on the West Bank as to how many Palestinians in exile it will accept back into the West Bank. In principle, it must accept all—as Israel in principle will accept all Jews. It is abandonment of the right of all Palestinians to return to Israel proper that is so politically contentious for the PLO.

The question of Palestinian factionalism springs directly from this issue. The more radical factions have a broader ideological vision of the problem, and they claim to maintain ambitions of recovering *all* of Palestine. Other factions envisage revolution throughout the Arab world as the necessary precursor to the successful establishment of a Palestinian state—a Pan-Arab movement, in effect, in which the

<sup>4</sup>Interview with an Israel-based scholar doing work on West Bank problems, January 1989.

Palestinians would be included among the main ideological and intellectual leaders.<sup>5</sup> These secular ideologists are eclipsed by the vision of the Islamists, who are likely to present an even more uncompromising agenda (see below). The major question, therefore, is whether Arafat can successfully impose realistic goals upon the movement as a whole. And as in any struggle, ideology is not always the issue in itself, but may serve as the *vehicle* for the ambitions of various factions and leaders. It may take some tough politicking among the Palestinians themselves, as well as pressure from the Soviet Union and the Arab world, to bring about a greater degree of moderation in the more extreme factions.

**When should the *intifada* be ended?** The *intifada* represents the critical political card for the PLO and the West Bank. Ending the *intifada* has immense value in a tradeoff for political gain, but if it is played prematurely, the Palestinians run the serious risk of losing the card altogether. (This is in sharp contrast to the other PLO "card," i.e., recognizing Israel's existence, which Arafat did not wish to play for a long time, but which really had value only in the playing, for the gain of formal ties with the United States.) The uprising, once turned off, in principle could be turned back on again at some point, but popular movements are not so readily manipulated. Indeed, many youthful activists already object to what they feel is excessive fraternizing by Palestinian intellectuals with Israeli leftists at a time when young Palestinians are still dying in the streets and have not yet realized any concrete gains.<sup>6</sup>

Israel may well demand an end to the *intifada* as a sign of good faith from the West Bank leadership or the PLO, but the Palestinians will not accept those terms unless Israel's counterterms offer clear promise of a Palestinian state. For Israel, an end to the *intifada* would almost surely be the *sine qua non* of any open-ended autonomy agreement; for the Palestinians, the open-ended autonomy agreement could not foreclose the end result of a state—indeed it would probably have to stipulate it. Process, in itself, will not suffice for the Palestinians.

<sup>5</sup>Matti Steinberg's study of George Habash and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) provides an excellent analysis of the leading leftist-ideological position within the PLO. ("The Worldview of Habash's 'Popular Front,'" *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, Number 47, Summer 1988.)

<sup>6</sup>See Daniel Williams, "Intimidation: Other Side of the Arab Uprising, Outbreak of Small-Scale Violence Aims at Muting Dovish Voices on Both Sides," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 1989.

**How does the PLO assert leadership over the West Bank state?** West Bank Palestinians are very eager to see the PLO actually establish a Palestinian government-in-exile, to *institutionalize the concept of a state*. They are concerned that their fortunes should no longer ride on the fate of Arafat or any other leader who may come along in the PLO. Once a government-in-exile has been established, it should have elected officials and should take policy decisions that represent the interests of the West Bankers. At that point, further institutional political competition will probably develop between the external leadership and the West Bank leadership; the latter will strive for maximum representation in the new government, even if the writ of the new government cannot extend to the territories still under Israeli occupation.<sup>7</sup>

Some eventual conflict between the external PLO and the local leadership is almost built into the situation: Since most of the local operational leadership of the *intifada* is under 25 years of age, it clearly is not in a position to assume major roles in the new national leadership of a Palestinian state. How easily will these youthful elements cede political authority to others, and to whom? Here is where the role of elections on the West Bank offers considerable merit for the Palestinian movement, since it provides a chance for local leadership to be selected—presumably without danger that the leadership will then be instantly arrested by the Israelis, as has regularly happened in the past.

**What will be done with the PLO in the end?** The PLO, like any institution, is loath to preside over its own demise. Some West Bankers have proposed that it take on the future role of overall commission for Palestinian affairs in a quasi-advisory capacity, much as the World Jewish Organization serves Israel. West Bankers are very ready to grant senior PLO leadership all the honor and recognition—and even political position—due to it for having sustained the Palestinian movement for so long. But the West Bankers also recognize that the era of the old leadership is probably drawing to a close. What is important for the West Bankers is that the PLO as an organization not impede the establishment of a Palestinian government—which can operate on a different procedural and legal basis than does a movement.<sup>8</sup> Israelis, too, are obviously intensely interested in this evolution—but only those who are ready to acquiesce to the concept of

<sup>7</sup>Much of this reasoning is based on an interview with a Palestinian activist in Jerusalem in January 1989.

<sup>8</sup>Based on an interview with a Palestinian activist in Jerusalem in January 1989.

a Palestinian state. As one perceptive ideological Likud member pointed out, for them the issue is not the *character* of the PLO at all: The mere acquiescence to talk to *any kind* of a PLO inevitably represents the unacceptable admission of a Palestinian state.<sup>9</sup>

Arafat himself now seems more relaxed about the problem of internal vs. external leadership. He has, in effect, already attained his goal of recognition for himself and his organization; no one is any longer seriously looking for alternatives to the PLO—there are no alternatives. The willingness of the United States to talk to the PLO was probably the turning point in Arafat's mind—and the reason he was ultimately willing to meet U.S. conditions for a dialogue.

**What will be done with the Palestinian Liberation Army and its fighters?** This issue will be of intense concern to Israel. If a future Palestinian state is to be firmly in control, it must take over responsibility for these forces. They cannot be left floating on the outside, available to serve aberrant irredentist forces. How will the state absorb them, and to what extent can they be partially recycled into militia forces? Both the Palestinian state and Israel must recognize that regardless of what settlement emerges, there will surely be irredentist elements within the Palestinian community that will seek political and military support—"a role in search of an actor," as Nasser once put it. It is important that the new Palestinian state leave as little wherewithal as possible for irredentist forces to operate, since they can only serve to undermine the credibility, sovereignty, and even security of the state. Syria would seem to be the most logical home for such a fringe irredentist movement—unless Syria, too, can ultimately be dragged into a comprehensive settlement.

## THE ISLAMIC FACTOR

As the West Bank movement continues the struggle, the Islamic elements in the uprising will move toward increasing conflict with the PLO leadership. They are likely to prove the most intractable of all elements on the Palestinian side that pose an obstacle to a negotiated settlement. These Islamic groups have long been at odds with the PLO over the kind of state they wish to see on the West Bank. They object to the PLO's historic call for a secular democratic state and will oppose it. For this reason, Israeli authorities over the years have turned a blind eye to Islamic political activity, which was perceived to be hostile to the theoretically more dangerous secular nationalist

<sup>9</sup>Based on an interview in Jerusalem in January 1989.

PLO.<sup>10</sup> This judgment may now come into question, especially when the Islamic radicals refuse in principle to deal at all with the Israelis and call for the complete return of all of Palestine to Islam. Palestine is viewed as a kind of "Islamic trust."<sup>11</sup>

Within the framework of Palestinian politics, the Islamic radicals are unhappy with the Arab world formulation that the PLO is the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians." While this formulation may be acceptable in the inter-Arab context—since it excludes Jordan or Syria as PLO spokesmen—it is not acceptable to Islamists as a statement about internal Palestinian politics. The Islamic elements are not willing to cede sole legitimate authority to the PLO and will contest it should the reality of a Palestinian state begin to emerge.<sup>12</sup>

The role of the Islamic elements over the long course of the uprising will have a major impact on their ultimate voice in any future state. The Islamic movement is far from united, and older Muslim Brotherhood elements are partially hostile to the more recent Islamic Jihad and HAMAS (the Islamic Resistance Movement) elements, in part inspired—but not directed—by the Ayatollah Khomeini. The differences are primarily tactical, and they also reflect personalities.<sup>13</sup> Yet pursuit of the Islamic vision involves some clear-cut political tradeoffs. The call for an Islamic state is unacceptable to the significant Christian element within the Palestinian population. The West and the USSR will be vastly less sympathetic to the prospects of a fu-

<sup>10</sup>Sahliyah, pp. 143, 160; see also Mohammed K. Shadid, "The Muslim Brotherhood Movement in the West Bank and Gaza," *Third World Quarterly*, "Islam and Politics," April 1988, pp. 674-675.

<sup>11</sup>Shaykh Khalil Quqa, a key leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS) in Palestine, has been particularly outspoken on these issues: "God has assembled the Jews in Palestine not to have them enjoy it as a homeland, but to make it a graveyard for them so the world at large will be saved from their filth. . . . Who gave any man on earth, a leader or all leaders, a state or all states, an organization or all organizations, the right to grant a single grain of Palestinian sand to establish a homeland for aliens in Palestine? . . . God forbid, if there is a recognition of Israel, will the Palestinian state become a security belt preventing the Islamists from pursuing jihad against the Israeli presence on the soil of Palestine? Will the leaders of this state confront the Islamists if they try to liberate their homeland and seek martyrdom?" (Quoted in Kuwait *Al-Anba'* October 8, 1988, FBIS NES, October 13, 1988.)

<sup>12</sup>"The PLO is just a stage in Israel's life and Israel a stage in the life of the Islamic tide." (Shaykh Quqa, FBIS, October 13, 1988.)

<sup>13</sup>For a more detailed discussion of this problem, see Robert Satloff, *Islam in the Palestinian Uprising*, Policy Focus No. 7, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 1988; also Mohammed K. Shadid, "The Muslim Brotherhood Movement in the West Bank and Gaza," *Third World Quarterly*, April 1988; also Emile Sahliyah, *In Search of Leadership, West Bank Politics Since 1967*, Chap. 7, "Islam as an Alternative," Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1988.

ture Palestinian state if it is to be Islamic in character—especially if it is to be redolent of Khomeini (even though it would probably have little in common with Shi'ite Iran). On the other hand, an Islamic tone in any anti-Israeli rallying cry has powerful resonance among most Palestinians and is one of the most important cultural features distinguishing them from the Israelis.

In September 1988, the Islamic elements began to show greater strength in the West Bank. HAMAS has directly challenged the PLO for the streets and for control of demonstrations and strikes. It has used intimidating tactics to help impose some of its directives. The PLO is anxious not to break with HAMAS because such a break would weaken the unity that has helped foster the *intifada* to date. HAMAS, like the pro-Khomeini groups, will not accept any partition of Palestine or the establishment of a secular Palestinian state. At this stage, HAMAS is unlikely to want to break with Fatah either.<sup>14</sup>

Two other factors also distinguish the Islamic movement among the Palestinians: Only the Islamists and the communists have *senior political leadership on the ground* in the West Bank. This presence gives them a political edge over PLO-oriented rivals, who must look to external political leadership for final authority. Second, the Islamists are subject to no external states that can intervene to influence their policies. The communists are susceptible to Soviet influence, and both the USSR and various Arab states can affect the PLO leadership politically. But there is no "external Islamic command" that can tell the Islamists what to do. This all means that the Islamic elements may be the last and most zealous holdouts against a peaceful settlement that calls for Palestinians to give up the hope of reconquering all of Palestine.

Over the longer run, the Islamic movement does not appear likely to emerge as the most powerful element in the West Bank resistance. The Palestinians are used to the secular and democratic character of their movement. But the struggle is far from over. If the PLO is unable to meet the challenge now posed by Jordan to take direct responsibility for West Bank affairs, and if the PLO is seen as feckless, indecisive, and irrelevant to the ultimate political needs of the West Bank strugglers, then it will be open to the charge by the Islamic radicals that its secular character is the source of its weakness. A bloody and

<sup>14</sup>Joel Greenberg, "Fundamentalists Battle PLO to Control Uprising Against Israel," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 13, 1988; also Daniel Williams, "Rivalry to Control Uprising Grows, Islamic Hard-Liners Impose Strike in Challenge to PLO," *Los Angeles Times*, September 8, 1988.

prolonged struggle with Israel for independence under those circumstances would probably greatly strengthen the prospects for the Islamic elements.

## VI. ISRAEL: OPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### PROBLEMS FOR ISRAEL

Among the wealth of concerns that the potential establishment of a Palestinian state raises for Israel, two issues in particular are constantly debated in calculations about the implications of a Palestinian state on the West Bank: security and terrorism.

### SECURITY

Many more rounds of the current struggle are likely to be required before new bargaining positions become clear. Only the continuing pain and cost of maintaining the struggle will raise fundamental doubts in Israel about the value of the West Bank. As options are considered, the concept of the Palestinian state is already becoming less of a psychological outrage than it has been in years past. (However, as one former chief of Israeli military intelligence points out, a "two-state solution in Palestine" was initially an acceptable solution to Zionist leaders before the establishment of the Israeli state and before its growth to its present power and size.<sup>1</sup>) Before any *security* judgments are passed on the issue, however, it is imperative that Israel examine the full implications of what such a state would mean in quite concrete and precise terms, to establish what can and cannot be managed. Few such studies were done as long as the idea was politically "unthinkable."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Yehoshafat Harkabi, "To Reach a 2-State Solution, Israeli Doves Must Be Heard," *Los Angeles Times*, April 4, 1989.

<sup>2</sup>A pioneer work was written by Mark A. Heller, *A Palestinian State, Implications for Israel*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1983. Not until 1989 was further major progress made in this kind of analysis, when the prestigious Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv, headed by former chief of Military Intelligence General Aharon Yaariv, published the report entitled *Toward a Solution*, which significantly urged that Israel not rule out a Palestinian state. The report urged that Israel not accept such a state in advance, but that one could emerge after a lengthy autonomy period. (See "Israel Think Tank: Don't Rule Out Palestinian State," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 13, 1989.) The report also concluded that nearly all of Israel's options were either unfeasible or not advisable at this point; see Joseph Alpher, "Options Israel Will Allow Fail the Workability Test," *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1989. The report implies that Israel may now have to consider what had been politically unacceptable heretofore.

The PLO question was examined further in an all-services annual Israeli intelligence report which reportedly stated that the PLO was the most viable partner



For many Israelis, of course, the problem cannot be viewed as a cold, strategic calculus. Giving up the West Bank implies defeat by "the Arabs" in general and the abandonment of the great dream of Jewish recovery of most of the historic Biblical territory. It is an issue at least as much laden with emotion, a sense of history, and national identity as it is a problem for the army. Other practical considerations exist as well. The creation of a Palestinian state will be considered by the Palestinians—and the Arab world as a whole—as an immense "Arab victory." Will an Israel in retreat be viewed as weaker, more exploitable than before? This dilemma has been faced by many states whose military ambitions have caused them to overextend themselves and who have then been forced into retreat. Israel in Lebanon repeated many of these arguments. So did the United States in Vietnam and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. In the real world, the retreat of a major power *does* have some significance. But must a prudent retreat for the sake of the broader national interest ultimately be taken as a sign of general loss of will? The psychology of retreat is not a simple calculus. Other Israelis fear that once a Palestinian state is created, it will simply represent the first stage in a larger strategy of the Palestinians and the Arab world to eliminate Israel entirely. This thought unquestionably exists among many in the Arab world. But the real question is whether, after such a Palestinian state solution had been reached, the broader Arab world would see it in its interests to spark yet another war with Israel, a great deal of which would be fought primarily on West Bank soil—and against a nuclear Israel?

### TERRORISM

*Terrorism* will inevitably increase both during negotiations for a Palestinian state and for a while after the establishment of the state. The new state will clearly have strong incentives to stop terrorist actions against Israel because the cost of failure to do so will be high. A Palestinian movement has no ready address, but a Palestinian state does. It is likely that a Palestinian Intelligence Service will establish close working relations with Israeli services in seeking jointly to combat terrorism operating into Israel out of the Palestinian state. The Palestinians will be highly motivated to do so.

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for talks to end the Arab uprising. See Daniel Williams, "Israeli Intelligence Said to View PLO as a Talks Partner," *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 1989.

Palestinian irredentism will also remain a problem, even after a settlement. But the irredentist cause will be vastly reduced and will enjoy little sympathy among most Arab states, which have been longing for years to get out from under the Palestinian problem and get on with other business. Inevitably, there will be one or two Arab states that will be tempted to ride the hobbyhorse of rejectionism and claims of betrayal of the Palestinian and Arab cause. Any fundamentalist state will surely take this position, while Syria is the most likely meaningful candidate to do so (Iran and Libya are too far away). But the ability of an Arab state to act on such a cause will be severely limited once the bulk of the Palestinians have their own state.

### ISRAEL AND THE POLITICS OF A PALESTINIAN STATE

No mainstream Israeli political figure is yet willing to come out in favor of a Palestinian state. Perhaps to do so now would be political suicide.<sup>3</sup> Nor can the new national coalition government formed in December 1988 lead to flexibility. All parts of the Israeli political spectrum agreed that the new coalition was absolutely unable to take any initiative on the Palestinian issue; all saw it doomed to reacting defensively to PLO, U.S., and other international moves.<sup>4</sup>

The Labor party is restive. Many of its younger elements opposed the coalition with the Likud because they believed that Labor needed to strike out and take an independent position on issues of war and peace. Other Labor members felt that it was essential to join a coalition to protect Israel from strong outside pressure, and especially to prevent Likud from forming a right-wing coalition that might even act dangerously on key strategic issues involving the Palestinians and the Arabs. Many—in both Likud and Labor—said the coalition was imperative to prevent Sharon from becoming Defense Minister.

Most Israelis have felt that Rabin, being a tough-minded Defense Minister, would do nothing foolish—such as attempting to stop the *intifada* outright by massive military force—but that he would also therefore fail to solve the problem, as some of the right-wing insist can be done. Most Israelis have also felt that a peacetime expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank was not conceivable because of the immense risks to ties with the United States, Egypt, and Europe. At least one ideological Likud member felt that expulsion was not

<sup>3</sup>One major Labor party politician warned, "Nothing is more dangerous than being prematurely right."

<sup>4</sup>Based on interviews in Jerusalem, January 1989.

conscionable in the Zionist philosophical framework and that Likud's ideological mentor Jabotinski had ruled out such an eventuality years earlier.<sup>5</sup>

Quite striking on the Israeli political front in January 1989 was the recognition by several ideological Likud members—who are committed to retaining the West Bank under Israeli control—that the country may be growing tired and may have no more stomach or ideological strength to persist against all pressures. These politicians reluctantly recognized that the body politic of Israel might not feel up to pursuing the grander dream, in view of the rising cost of achieving it. Some members of the Likud would not rule out the possibility that Shamir himself might ultimately bow to reality and commit Israel to giving up the West Bank. There is no hint of that yet, however—despite rising Israeli recognition that both U.S. policymakers and the U.S. Jewish community are increasingly dissatisfied with present Israeli policies. A major new U.S. policy milestone was reached in Secretary of State James Baker's statement in March 1989 that "if you can't have direct negotiations that are meaningful . . . [without] the PLO, we would then have to see negotiations between Israel and representatives of the PLO."<sup>6</sup>

The hopes of the Likud ideologists were always buttressed by a belief that the demographic problem—the faster growth of the Palestinian population than the Israeli (the so-called "bedroom war")—could be offset by further *Jewish immigration*. Hopes especially focused on the millions of Jews in the Soviet Union whose emigration in large numbers could have a massive impact on the Israeli demographic balance. But now that dream is fading—ironically, inadvertently punctured by Gorbachev's new policies permitting Jewish emigration. The painful reality has dawned that the vast majority of Soviet Jews who are emigrating are *not* going to Israel, but to the United States. In 1988, only about 2,000 out of some 19,000 Soviet Jews went to Israel.<sup>7</sup> This trend is unlikely to reverse itself, a fact reflected upon bitterly by many Jews—and not only the ideologists—who see it as an implicit commentary on the character of the Jewish state. Nor are Jews from other countries—especially from the United States—emigrating any more to Israel. It seems as if the

<sup>5</sup>These various views were expressed in the course of interviews in Jerusalem in January 1989.

<sup>6</sup>Norman Kempster and Doyle McManus, "Israel May Have to Talk to PLO, Baker Declares," *Los Angeles Times*, March 15, 1989.

<sup>7</sup>Cited during an interview in January 1989 with an Israeli expert on West Bank policy.

dreams of *'aliya* (the in-gathering of immigrants) are being dispelled by the harsh reality that there are Jews who prefer not to live in Israel. Several thoughtful Israelis speculated that perhaps it takes a "special kind of Jew" to make the moral and cultural commitment to live in Israel by choice, as opposed to having nowhere else to go.

Thus, if the present national coalition government should founder, the Likud could well turn back to the prospects of a right-wing coalition with the religious and nationalist parties. It is important to recognize, however, that the religious parties in Israel are much more consumed with questions of the quality of Jewish life in Israel than they are with territory. If maintenance of the territories were to suggest longer-range damage to the character and practice of Jewish religious life, or threatened much loss of Jewish lives, they would ultimately opt against retention of the territories. Peace Now activists in Israel actually estimate that, party affiliation aside, the present Knesset comprises 65 doves and 55 hawks.<sup>8</sup> How true this is remains to be seen, but it may suggest the extent to which a national consensus against talking to the PLO may be breaking down. For most Israelis, "talking to the PLO" has become a codeword for ultimate acquiescence to a Palestinian state—but only under exceptionally beady-eyed bargaining.

The settlers would remain a major stumbling block to any establishment of a Palestinian state. Of the 80,000 or so settlers now living on the West Bank, perhaps only 20 percent are seen as *ideologically* committed to staying.<sup>9</sup> Most of the rest are either residents of bedroom communities just outside Jerusalem or have chosen to live on the West Bank for practical reasons—cheaper housing due to government subsidies, and calculations of shrewd investment. If the territories ever revert to the Palestinians, the state will pay handsome reimbursement fees to those who leave their homes. (Most residents of the Israeli settlement of Yamit in the Sinai were paid a quarter of a million U.S. dollars to give up their homes before the region reverted to Egypt.)

The policies of the present Israeli government seem strongly committed to the status quo, even while recognizing that it cannot be maintained. In the end, however, if only out of self-defense, Israel will have to develop its own "peace plan," which most likely will involve some kind of Camp David autonomy formula. This will not be

<sup>8</sup>Figures cited by a Peace Now activist during an interview in January 1989.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*; Peace Now is itself ideologically predisposed to downplay the strength of ideological commitment among right-wing settlers.

acceptable to the PLO or to the West Bankers. It is possible, however, that an autonomy scheme in which the *outcome is left open* could become the road to the de facto establishment of a Palestinian state. An autonomous West Bank could readily take advantage of its new freedoms to continue to develop local institutions, which would lay the groundwork for independence at some later stage. But even this "open-ended autonomy" would not be accepted by Palestinians if it did not bring withdrawal of Israeli forces and the prospect for genuine self-government. De facto PLO leadership would have to be at the helm in the West Bank before the PLO leadership would feel it could trust the Israelis to take such a step.

The long-range implications of a sweeping, open-ended autonomy plan are such that the plan is opposed by the ideological Likud. Yet broad, open-ended autonomy could provide the face-saving device that the more pragmatic Likud might accept if the full consequences did not need to be addressed now. It would be an evolutionary approach to a Palestinian state. Anything less than that will not wash with the Palestinians—although in principle such a *tacit acceptance* by Israel of an eventual Palestinian state might enable moderates on both sides to postpone or avert a showdown with their respective radicals.

The recent Israeli proposal for elections on the West Bank affects the critical interests of all parties. The Israeli right-wing perceives—correctly—that elections start the fatal process of establishing formal PLO control over the West Bank which will lead ultimately to a Palestinian state. Other elements in Likud and Labor hope that elections will wean a local PLO leadership away from the external leadership and will lead it to settle in the end for broad local autonomy. The external PLO worries about just such divisions arising, but also recognizes that elections would be the beginning of a *tacit* Israeli acceptance of a process that will in fact ultimately lead to an independent Palestinian state.

A more negative tactic that Likud may be considering would be to concede nothing and wait until radical PLO pressure on the moderate PLO leadership to demonstrate results rises to an intolerable level. At that point, Arafat himself might not be able to hold the line on terrorism within his own organization—which would lead to the rupture of PLO ties with the United States and would force the PLO back into a far less compromising position, thereby vindicating Shamir's position that the PLO cannot be dealt with.<sup>10</sup> Such a tactic

<sup>10</sup>While Shamir, a skilled politician, may well rise to meet the new realities being created around Israel on a daily basis, he still often reverts to the old, uncompromising

could go far toward torpedoing any chance of direct Israeli-PLO negotiations. But it would not solve Israel's longer-term problem of the *intifada*.

### ZERO-SUM NATIONALISMS

As that acute observer of the West Bank demographic problem, Meron Benvenisti, points out, Palestinians and Jews represent two competing nationalities in a zero-sum game.<sup>11</sup> At this stage, it is essential to the psychology and mental security of each side to absolutely deny the existence—and the rights—of the other. How will this vicious circle be broken? One is struck by how much the issue of the PLO and even the prospects for a West Bank Palestinian state are really tied up with *psychological and emotional issues*. Strikingly, two of the most outspoken figures in Israel who believe that a Palestinian state is ultimately in the cards—and workable—are the two former chiefs of Israeli Military Intelligence, General Aharon Yaariv and General Yehoshafat Harkabi.<sup>12</sup> Other voices are also being regularly raised in the Israeli liberal press to think about the unthinkable. In March 1988, a leading Labor official provided the statistic—for what it's worth—that 39 percent of the population were willing to negotiate with the PLO. By December of that same year, a *Yediot Aharanot* poll reported that 54 percent of the public were willing to talk to the PLO.<sup>13</sup> But no mainstream politician is yet willing to publicly accept the idea of a Palestinian state at this stage.

If the Palestinian dream—expressed in its National Charter as abolishing the Zionist state in favor of a democratic binational Palestinian state—is unacceptable to Israel, so too is the romantic Zionist conception of Greater Israel from the Nile to the Euphrates an expression of a politically unattainable ideal. Yet these aspects cannot be lightly dismissed. Here we encounter Benvenisti's view of the clash of mutually exclusive national symbols of two peoples deeply identifying with the same turf.

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rhetoric to encourage the faithful: "Aliens, terrorists, PLO men and others are recalled . . . today. But they are brutal, wild, alien invaders in the Land of Israel that belongs to the people of Israel, and only to them." Cited in Associated Press report, "Palestinians 'Alien Invaders,' Shamir Says," *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1989.

<sup>11</sup>Interview with Benvenisti in Jerusalem, March 1988.

<sup>12</sup>Based on interviews with these two officials, neither of whom welcomes the prospect of a Palestinian state but both of whom see it as the lesser evil among many other options.

<sup>13</sup>Cited in FBIS, NES, August 5, 1989, quoting *Yediot Aharanot* of August 4, 1988.

The possibility cannot be absolutely excluded—although it appears highly unlikely—that events will conspire to soften the Palestinian position so that Arafat will settle for much less, or that a West Bank population will demand that Arafat settle for much less. Events are now moving in the opposite direction—if they were ever conducive to such a limited settlement before. A Palestinian mentality that calls for resisting occupation over decades—or even a century—is not likely to be swayed by short-term developments, even when the pain and opportunity costs in Western eyes would seem to be insupportable. Western and Israeli observers must recognize the persistence of some elements of the “Middle Eastern perspective” on history, which views developments against the backdrop of ancient struggles that require centuries to resolve. The West Bank problem may not in fact take centuries to resolve, given the participation of so much of the world in the process; the ability of both parties to think in such timeless, atavistic terms, however, should not be dismissed.

Analysts must see the conflict through Arab eyes before judgments can be made about what the West Bank or Arafat will do. *Survival* has been the single distinguishing characteristic of the Palestinian movement over the years. Western analysts, and many Arabs, have pronounced Arafat out of the game repeatedly, yet he has survived, as has the PLO with him. For many Palestinians, that is the bottom line. The idea of the movement and a state still lives.

## **VII. THE INTERNATIONAL ELEMENT**

Two important new international factors are now altering the Palestinian-Israeli calculus: Arab state relationships following the Iran-Iraq war, and the emergence of a much more active and pragmatic Soviet leadership and policies.

### **THE ARAB STATES AFTER THE ENDING OF THE GULF WAR**

The start of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980 was the first important influence of the decade on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The war immediately took Iraq—a powerful radical force that had spearheaded the drive to expel Egypt from Arab councils because of the Camp David settlement—out of the Arab-Israeli game. Iran had just swung out of the moderate column to become a radical anti-Israeli force that contributed powerfully to the expulsion of U.S. and Israeli forces from Lebanon in 1983-84. The Gulf states were transfixed by the prospects of Islamic fundamentalism sweeping across the Gulf and threatening their regimes. In short, for those states that wished to keep the international and Arab focus on the Arab-Israeli problem—Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and also the PLO—the Iran-Iraq war was a disastrous long-term distraction.

But suddenly, in the summer of 1988, the fighting war ended. International attention can once again turn to the Arab-Israeli problem. Other forces in the region can likewise resume focus on their own roles. The interplay of new factors is still unclear as the new geopolitical kaleidoscope sorts itself out. The major factors include:

- The future role of Iraq. Will Iraq continue to play the more moderate role it had adopted during the war—if not before—or will it seek a role of leadership predicated on the struggle against the "Zionist entity"? Iraq seems determined to have revenge against Syria—which supported Iran throughout the war. But how? Iraq can undercut Syria by supporting the moderate leadership of the PLO that seeks to negotiate with Israel over a Palestinian state. Syria has so far maneuvered its weight against such a settlement.



- How much can Iraq weaken Syria? A truly weakened Syria, or the overthrow of the Alawi rulers in Damascus, could have an immense impact on the PLO and hasten the collapse of rejectionist Palestinian forces that have so long enjoyed Syrian patronage.

Syria's own policies will be of critical importance. It will almost certainly dedicate major resources to stymie a Palestinian-Israeli settlement, or the establishment of a Palestinian state that Syria might not be able to control. Syria itself wishes to have the dominant influence in the region. A peace settlement would leave it alone with Israel, with few prospects for regaining the Golan Heights. Syria could even be tempted to raise the prospects of war with Israel to maintain an environment of regional turmoil.

If Syrian-Israeli tensions got out of hand, a real military conflict would have a major impact on the West Bank and Jordan. Such a scenario, in its extreme, could even be utilized by a right-wing Israeli government to end the Hashemite regime and to expel large numbers of West Bank Palestinians into Jordan, fulfilling major parts of Ariel Sharon's vision. This dangerous scenario seems rather improbable under present circumstances. Few other Arab states would see another Arab-Israeli war as being in the Arab interest. Yet the indefinite postponement of a settlement and the possible reradicalization of the PLO under Arafat or a post-Arafat leadership could have an unpredictably destabilizing impact on the region.

## NEW SOVIET POLICIES

A striking new factor in discussions with Israeli and Jordanian officials is the diplomatic prominence of the Soviet Union. Senior officials in Israel and Jordan have spoken of the "new Soviets" and commented that "they talk just like the Americans now."<sup>1</sup> More important than a new Soviet style is the degree to which the Soviet Union now seems to have become a more active player in the diplomatic process and a de facto party to the evolution toward a settlement.

The Israelis are engaged in close and regular dialogue with Soviet officials, both informally and formally. The Jordanians were even more deeply involved in complex tradeoffs with the USSR, which they were trying to assist in resolving the Afghanistan problem in return

<sup>1</sup>Based on interviews in Israel and Jordan in March 1988.

for Soviet assistance in bringing the PLO and Syria around to a more reasonable position on a peace settlement.

It remains to be seen whether the Soviet Union will be able to bring about a peace settlement. The Soviets will assuredly not extend effort on behalf of something like the Shultz plan, but there is already clear evidence that the USSR has played a significant role in dissuading the radical wing of the PLO from blocking Arafat's recognition of Israel and the opening of talks with the United States.<sup>2</sup> Only a subdued radical wing of the PLO could have given Arafat the maneuvering room to meet the precise U.S. conditions for opening bilateral talks. This is a major Soviet accomplishment.

The USSR will undoubtedly also place pressure on Syria to play a more constructive role in the region and to stop trying to block the peace process. Syria promises to become a major headache for the USSR in the Middle East as Soviet goals themselves shift from obstructing a peaceful settlement toward welcoming one.

The USSR wants to be perceived—and to act—as an important and reasonable arbiter in the Middle East. The policies of even a newly moderated Soviet Union, however, will cause some discomfort to U.S. policymakers because they inevitably will spell an end to the near total monopoly the United States has enjoyed for decades in trying to arrange for a peace settlement. Most of the world now feels that the United States has had its chances and muffed them. Forces such as the evolving Palestinian leadership and a moderated Soviet Union will weigh much more heavily in future peace calculations, for better or for worse.

### THE U.S. FACTOR

Nevertheless, the United States will play a critical role in the process, by either omission or commission, or both. As noted earlier, the American Jewish community, increasingly active and outspoken on the *intifada* question, could have a major impact on the White House in supporting a more active U.S. role in pushing the Shamir government to face realities. While emphasis on the diplomatic

<sup>2</sup>See Michael Parks, "Palestine Recognized by Soviets," *Los Angeles Times*, November 19, 1988: "Soviet recognition of the [new] Palestinian state was expected because Moscow had been pressing not only the PLO's mainstream Fatah faction but also more radical factions." See also a statement by a PLO Executive Committee member on October 22, 1988, indicating that in negotiations with the PLO, the Soviets "also asked that the Palestinian political program must be flexible, acceptable and realistic." (FBIS, NES, October 24, 1988.)

process—as a means to move toward settlement of intractable issues—can be very helpful, it is unlikely to work when either one or both parties do not want any kind of outcome that might emerge from that process. Although the United States clearly cannot dictate terms to Israel or to the PLO, it is important that U.S. policymakers have some analytic sense of where events are ultimately heading, or can head. Without that sense of political direction—even if it is not publicly articulated—trust in a blind process between unwilling partners will not work. The United States must also determine the likely costs of delay. Perhaps in a world where U.S.-Soviet relations are played at a less zero-sum level, some degree of East-West urgency has drained from the issue. But it would also be a disservice to all regional parties if the East-West struggle was the primary issue that formed the American agenda.

## VIII. CONCLUSIONS

A Palestinian state on the West Bank is overwhelmingly the most probable long-term outcome of the present struggle. The logic of the state imposes itself increasingly as events evolve over the decades. This evolution has been based on:

- The durability of the PLO and its leadership, despite its many failings.
- The continued acceptance of the PLO by all Palestinians as a symbol of national aspiration.
- The withdrawal of Jordan as an active participant in the *struggle for settlement* (which does not exclude a close relationship with Jordan freely arrived at by a future Palestinian state).
- The new sense of independence of the West Bank population and the realization that it must resolve its own dilemma.
- The fact of the *intifada*, which has swept away most of the traditional elements who were willing to settle for some lesser goal of autonomy within Israel.
- The increased hostility and anger of the whole West Bank community, regardless of political position, at the harshness and bloodshed that the Israelis have already inflicted due to the *intifada*.
- The inexorable elimination of alternative political settlements with Israel: only a West Bank state or the expulsion of the West Bank population now remain as logical and realistic options.
- The realities of Israel's limited options and its need to assess anew the cost of the price it is paying for continued occupation of the West Bank.
- A growing weariness with the conflict on the part of the Israelis.
- The lack of any leadership in Israel on this issue, which is pushing Israel further and further onto the defensive.
- The recognition by all Israelis that the status quo is no longer viable.

- The opening of direct negotiations between the United States and the PLO, establishing de facto indirect negotiations between Israel and the PLO.
- Increasing U.S. and international pressure on Israel to deal with the PLO and to acquiesce to an eventual Palestinian state.
- The diminution of the East-West conflict under Gorbachev's revolution, which in turn diminishes the *strategic* importance of Israel to the United States in the region in an East-West context.
- The gradual resolution of other regional conflicts in the world in the new East-West atmosphere, which leaves the Palestinian-Israeli conflict conspicuously unresolved.
- Increased recognition by the Arab world that whatever ambivalence it may feel toward the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, the ability of external Arab states to manipulate and control the movement is diminishing.
- The increased interest of the USSR in seeking a settlement of the Palestinian problem along moderate lines—but which almost surely will include the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The inevitability of the Palestinian state surpasses any judgments about the *desirability* of that state, but it does not dismiss the immense practical and psychological problems that the foundation of such a state would create. An initial look at some early analysis suggests that the problems, however great, are not unmanageable. But the *practical problems* are ultimately susceptible to solutions, whereas the ideological ones are not.

In the end, U.S. and Israeli policy must be increasingly informed not by what seems preferable in the abstract, but by what seems most likely in the real world. That policy must then be molded toward its optimum shape. Policies on all sides designed to resist the hard fact of Palestinian national movement have thus far been painfully unsuccessful. Even the PLO now recognizes that its dream of vanquishing Israel is not attainable. Continued efforts by either side to resist what now seems the inevitable compromise of conflicting national aspirations will prove frustrating—and perhaps very costly.